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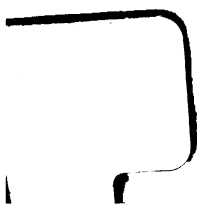
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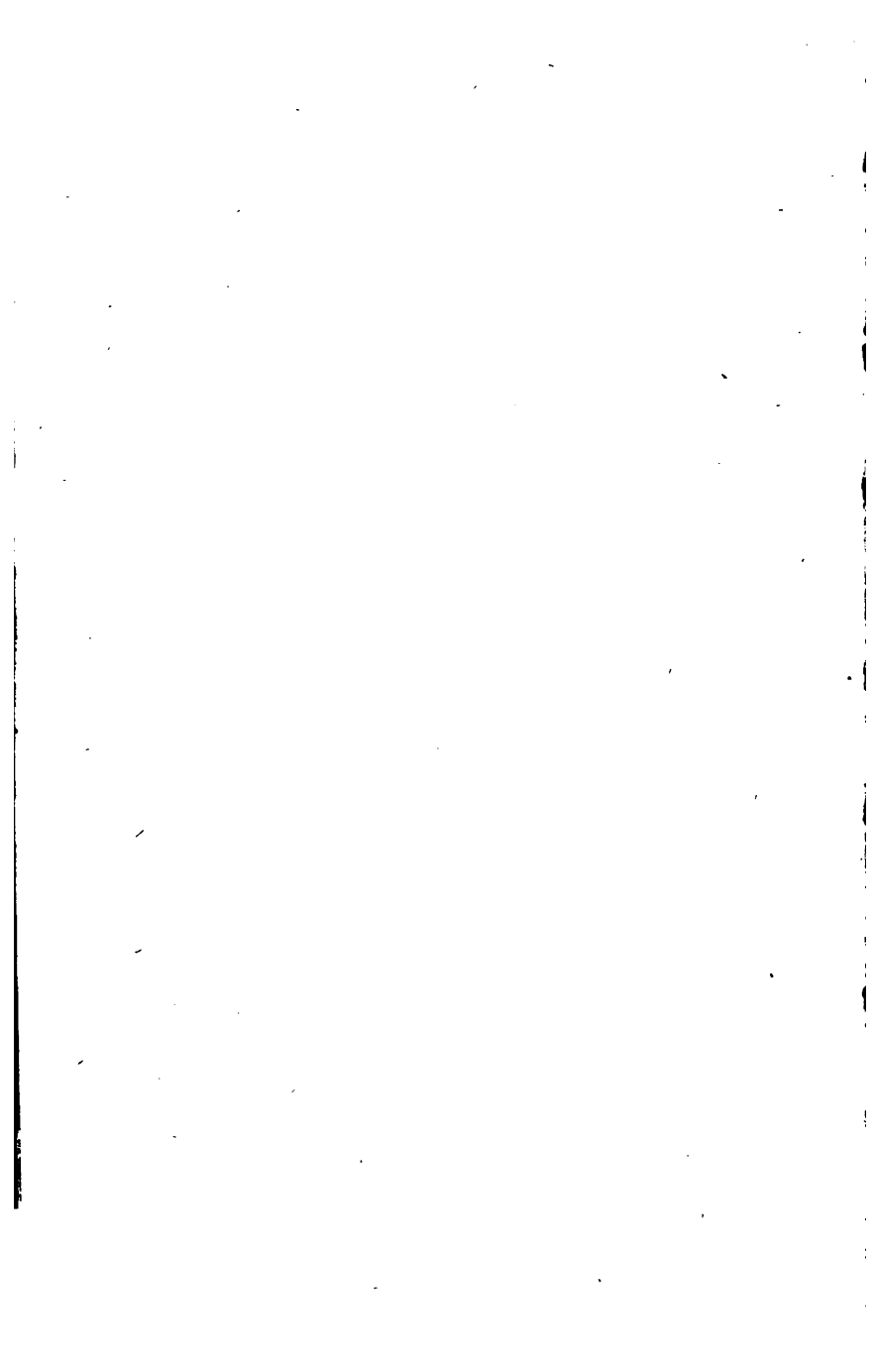
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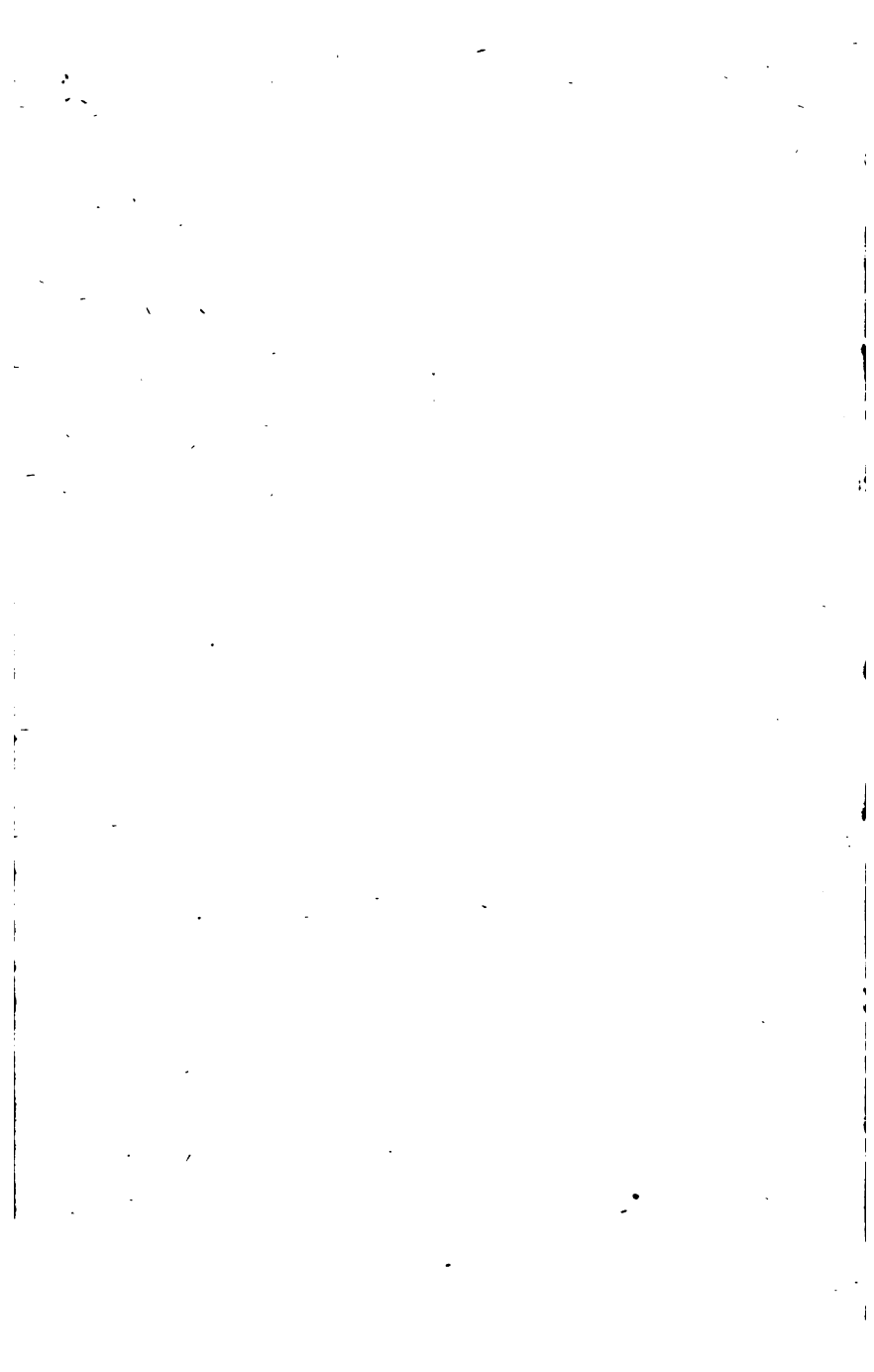
TO
ARTHUR BRISBANE

Dr. Book Store 6 Dec. 1942



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Gallops



Gallops

I

THE PARISH OF ST. THOMAS EQUINUS

THE bishop settled himself in an arm-chair, crossed his short legs, and gave a sigh of relief and comfort. Through the open window he could see the hills across the valley and the two spires of Oakdale village. There was a gleam of silver in the bottom-lands where a bend of the river revealed itself. Out of doors the air was hot with the afternoon sun and murmurous with insect noises, but the large drawing-room was pleasantly darkened and cool. The bishop felt that he had earned peace, and meant to enjoy it. With half-closed eyes he watched the tea-things brought in and the two slender young women seat

themselves by the table. Mrs. Alden Adams began to make the tea.

"Did you have a good time?" she asked the bishop.

"Yes," said the bishop; "I suppose so. It was rather extraordinary, however.—Two lumps and a little cream," he added.

"Extraordinary?" Mrs. Adams echoed inquiringly as she passed the cup.

"I think I may say *very* extraordinary," he replied in an injured tone.

Miss Colfax stopped in the middle of a stitch—she was embroidering something.

"I suppose the rector bored you to death," she said. "I hope you ordered him to stop advising the farmers to put up wire."

"Wire? Wire what?" asked the prelate, as if he were hearing of a new heresy.

"Wire fences, of course," the girl replied. "You can't jump wire."

The bishop seemed at a loss. "No," he said; "I suppose not. I don't want to. But, my dear young woman, I have n't seen the rector."

"Why," said Mrs. Adams, who was try-

ing to snuff the lamp under the kettle, "I thought you and Willie had gone to the rectory in the victoria."

"That 's what we were going to do," the bishop answered, with a resentful note in his voice; "but we gave up the victoria and your horses. The ones we did take made other arrangements."

The girl looked up from her work. "An accident?" she inquired.

The bishop hemmed. "I should hardly call it an accident. An accident is something contrary to probabilities." Both women looked puzzled. "My young friend, Mr. William Colfax," he went on, "informed me, as we were about to start, that the horses harnessed to the victoria were such 'rum skates'—pardon me, those were *his* words—that he would prefer to take me with some of his own."

"I am glad he was so thoughtful," observed his sister; "it is n't often that he is."

The bishop scrutinized the girl. She was earnestly embroidering. The corners of his mouth twitched.

"It *was* thoughtful," he continued. "He had a high red cart and a tandem. Two grooms held the horse in front, and there was another at the head of the wheeler."

The girl dropped the work in her lap. "I think Willie's manners are improving," she said simply. "He has n't been so civil to anybody stopping in the house since he let Carty Carteret ride Man-slaughter. He must like you."

"But I don't think," Mrs. Adams objected, "that a tandem is the proper thing for a bishop to visit one of his rectors in—not the first time, anyway."

"I may say," observed the bishop, "that this thought occurred to me also."

"Oh, stuff, Kate!" the girl interposed. "We 're not in town. You 're ruffled because Willie said your victoria horses were skates—and they are."

The bishop avoided a discussion of this question. "It may be," he said, "but I should have preferred them to the tandem. William said that he believed his horses were safe, or if they were not we should

find it out. Before I was quite in the cart the front one pawed one of the men, and they let go of him."

"What could you expect?" said the girl. "He'd never been put to harness before."

"William mentioned that fact after we had started," the bishop continued. "At the Four Corners we met a steam threshing-machine, and the leader took the road in the opposite direction from the village. Then they both ran away." He paused to allow his words to take effect. The bare fact seemed to him impressive enough. He reflected what a terrible picture the newspapers might make of Bishop Cunningham in a runaway, and he considered how he could soften the information for his wife.

"They must have taken the Hemlock Hill road," Miss Colfax said thoughtfully. "How far did they run?"

The prelate looked annoyed. "Really, I can't say," he replied. "I don't know the country, you know. At first your brother thought we'd stop for the groom—we had lost him at the threshing-ma-

chine. But the horses pulled so that he asked me if I did n't think we would better let them go and enjoy it while it lasted." He swallowed some tea, and glanced from one to the other of the women.

"You could n't have been very far from the Galloways'," Mrs. Adams suggested uncertainly, as though she were expected to say something. "We dine there to-night, you know. Pretty road, is n't it?"

"Is it?" said the bishop, dryly. Both women laughed. "I dare say, I dare say," he went on; "but I was thinking of something else than the scenery. We stopped the horses at the foot of the hill, and William said that if I did n't mind putting off going to the rectory he would go in and trade the leader to Mr. Galloway. He said that it was no use bothering with such a puller; and I quite agreed with him, though I wished he had come to that conclusion sooner."

"Willie had promised to let me hunt Albion," said the girl, regretfully.

"Never mind, dear," exclaimed her aunt; "you can have Alden's Thunder.

I think he 's afraid to ride him himself. But you missed seeing the rector," she added, turning to the bishop; "that was too bad."

Miss Colfax laughed. "You did n't miss much, and you did have a good drive. Of course it was n't very long, but while it lasted it must have been rare. I 've never had a tandem run with me." The prelate looked at her wonderingly. "But," she continued, "I don't see how Willie could have made much of a trade, with Albion so wet and hot."

The bishop's eye lighted up. "Yes; that was rather extraordinary."

"Extraordinary?" his companions repeated together.

"How, extraordinary?" Eleanor asked. "And you said you had an extraordinary afternoon, too. I don't see anything extraordinary about it." Sitting erect, with her hands in her lap, and a shaft of sunlight burnishing her hair, she was very beautiful, and as the bishop looked upon her his expression softened.

"My dear young lady," he explained,

"I am a stout, elderly person, and for twenty years I have gone about in a brougham drawn, I may say, by a confidential horse. I have had to do only with the things which are the duties of a city clergyman. I have been a bishop but six months, and this is my first introduction to Oakdale, which my venerable predecessor sometimes alluded to as the parish of St. Thomas Equinus. Some things about it seem a little new, you know—yes, I may even say extraordinary."

The girl looked at him reprovingly, as if she suspected him of joking.

"I suppose," said Mrs. Adams, "that you are not much interested in hunting, and all that. I know a man—Mr. Fairfield, the architect—who feels just as you do about it. He says this is the dullest place he ever got into."

"I should n't call it dull," protested the bishop.

"Well, I 'm glad of that," she replied gratefully. "I should hate to have you bored. I hate being bored myself."

Miss Colfax yawned as if at the mention

of the word, and put a slim and very white hand to her mouth. "You have n't told us yet what Willie got for Albion," she said lazily.

"I am not quite certain whether I know," the bishop replied. "It was somewhat complicated."

"Why? Was n't Charley Galloway at home?" asked Mrs. Adams.

"Oh, yes. We met him in the drive, and William asked him at once if he could detect anything wrong in the leader's wind. He said he had galloped him six miles to find out. That was one of the things which struck me as extraordinary."

"You did n't think Willie was so clever, did you?" asked the girl.

"No; I did n't," said the bishop. "There were several other interesting occurrences, however, before the bargain was concluded. Mr. Galloway offered us refreshments, and then invited me out to see his horses jump."

"Only his green ones, I suppose," said the girl, with a shade of contempt—"lunged in the runway."

"Was that it? There was a kind of lane with a high fence on both sides, and barriers erected at intervals. The stablemen shooed the horses over without any one on them. Then, for my particular benefit, Mr. Galloway ended by sending a Jersey cow over. You know I am the president of a Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals!"

"Really!" exclaimed Mrs. Adams, as though she found it hard to believe.

"It's odd the way he loves that cow," observed Miss Colfax. "He says he'll match her against any cow in America."

The bishop nervously gulped down his tea, and set the cup on the table. "I think," he said, "that, if you will allow me, I must call Mr. Galloway a very extraordinary young man."

Mrs. Adams laughed. "He must have had that waistcoat on," she said meaningly to her niece.

The ghost of a smile softened the bishop's mouth. "I think it likely," he said. "It was red, yellow, and black."

"There's blue in it, too," Miss Colfax

added. "I made it myself. Kate is a little envious because it 's more effective than the one she made for Willie. But please tell us how the trade came out."

"At first it seemed as though there was n't going to be one. Mr. Galloway was n't sure that he cared for a steeple-chaser, or that he had anything to barter."

"Yes, of course!" the girl exclaimed. "It 's always that way. Go on, please."

"But finally he brought out a big sorrel horse which he called Lorelei."

"Lorelei? Lorelei?" repeated Miss Colfax. "How was she bred?" The bishop sat up with a start. "Oh, never mind!" she continued. "Probably you did n't ask. What cut of horse was it?"

The bishop shut his lips tight, settled himself again, and folded his hands.

"I mean," said the girl, "was it a harness horse or a jumper?"

A mental conflict was going on inside the prelate. Was it meet for a bishop of the Church to submit to all this? But the tea and the easy-chair and the girl's gray eyes were mollifying his indignation,

and his sense of humor was reasserting itself.

"A jumper, I think," he answered in a resigned way. "Mr. Galloway said she could jump an enormous height—ten feet, if I remember correctly." The aunt and niece exchanged glances. "He said he had just got her from Long Island, and did n't want to part with her, only she was too slow to race, and he had plenty of hunters."

"What did Willie think of her?"

"He asked me if it did n't look as though her front legs had been fired—I think it was fired."

"Probably had been," Mrs. Adams interpolated.

"Well, Mr. Galloway was indignant about it; and I said I should n't venture any opinion—in fact, I said I had n't any, which was the truth."

"How odd!" said Miss Colfax, looking at him suspiciously.

"Not at all," her aunt objected. "Sometimes even a veterinary can't tell."

"They examined Albion after that,"

continued the bishop. "William—very honorably, I thought—admitted that he pulled a little." There was a twinkle in the prelatial eye. "But he expatiated on his wind and his endurance, and recited his pedigree."

"War-cry out of a Lapidist mare, second dam by True Blue, third by Long-fellow," the girl repeated. "It 's very good, is n't it?"

The bishop looked appealingly at Mrs. Adams.

"Yes; it 's capital," she said reassuringly.

"Do you mind giving me a little more tea?" inquired the bishop. "But," he went on, "Mr. Galloway said that he could n't think of exchanging on even terms. He suggested that William should throw in a dun-colored pony and some kind of a cart."

"The pig!" exclaimed Miss Colfax.

The bishop laughed. "William seemed to be of that opinion. He intimated that if I wanted to convert a Jew I had the opportunity. I thought it was wiser for me

to withdraw, so I went to see the Jersey cow."

"Well, how did they settle it?" asked the girl.

"As far as I could understand, they arranged a balance by extending the scope of the negotiations. Your brother secured Lorelei, a pair of cobs,—cobs, I believe,—a brood mare, and some chickens."

"Charley's game Japs, of course," said the girl, half to herself. The bishop looked puzzled, but disregarded the interruption.

"Mr. Galloway got Albion," he explained, "another horse named Jupiter, the cart, the dun-colored pony, a fox-terrier, and a lady's bicycle. It was very ridiculous; don't you think so?"

The women seemed not to hear the question. They were considering the terms of the trade.

"It was characteristic of Willie to trade your bicycle," said Mrs. Adams to her niece.

"I don't care," the girl replied; "I

never use it. Did he tell Charley about Albion running away?"

"Well," said the bishop, slowly, "as we drove off he did tell him that the horse pulled a good deal."

"And that was the second time he had told him," said Mrs. Adams.

"Yes. And Mr. Galloway advised your nephew to keep the mare's legs in bandages for a few days. He explained that they might be stiff after her journey on the cars."

"I have my suspicions about those legs," Miss Colfax remarked. "Charley is a bit too keen for a gentleman." She moved idly to the piano, and began to play. The bishop watched her with growing amazement. She played on, perhaps for ten minutes.

"That was very beautiful—wonderful!" he exclaimed when she stopped. She nodded, and swung herself around on the piano-stool.

"Do you remember whether the cobs were light chestnut?" she asked.

"I do not," said the bishop; and muttering to himself, he left the room.

THE Alden Adamses, their niece, and Bishop Cunningham found the usual party at the Galloways' that evening; but young Colfax sent word that he was indisposed. At the last moment the tip had come that there was to be a quiet cocking-main in the village. He considered the advisability of taking the bishop, who seemed to him to have possibilities worth cultivating, but decided that it might cause talk.

The bishop was rather confused by the fashion in which the people at the dinner addressed each other by their Christian names, or even more informally; but he sat next to Mrs. Galloway, who impressed him favorably. She was the daughter of a Philadelphia millionaire who was a pillar of the Presbyterian faith, and she had been married only a year. It was her first season at Oakdale, and the bishop experienced a certain feeling of relief in her company. The dinner was good, if the guests were somewhat noisy; and the

bishop adapted himself to the conditions with the cheerfulness of a liberal churchman and a man of culture. Mrs. Galloway, he found, although a dissenter by birth, adopted her husband's religious preferences in the country; and she was so much interested in the bishop's project for a boys' gild in the village that he was encouraged to believe his first impressions of Oakdale incorrect. He felt again as though he were in a society which he understood; and, furthermore, the reliable victoria horses were in the stable waiting to take him home.

Miss Colfax, who sat on his right, appeared content with the occasional remarks which served her other neighbor, Jimmy Braybrooke, in the stead of conversation, and left the prelate for the most part to his hostess. As the dessert was served, however, he became aware that Miss Colfax was talking down the table to Galloway about the afternoon's horse-trade; and this conversation attracted Mrs. Galloway's attention also.

She heard her husband say, "Oh, yes,

Lorelei will jump anything." There was a lull in the talk, and the words came distinctly. She looked up.

"Lorelei?" she repeated half aloud. Then, raising her voice: "Charley Galloway, you don't mean to tell me you traded that horse to Mr. Colfax? If you did, you will take her back. You told me yesterday she was broken down and not worth twenty-five cents."

A roar of laughter broke from the men—all except the bishop. He was regarding Mrs. Galloway with silent admiration. Yet, as Varick said afterward, he must have missed half the joke, because he was unaware that the lady spoke with the authority which clothes the bank-account of an establishment.

Galloway, the unblushing, was for once discomfited, and the laughter rose again. Just then the footman whispered something in his ear, and he hastily left the room.

"I trust there has been some mistake about this," remarked the bishop, benevolently.

"He ought to be ashamed of himself," said Miss Colfax. "Willie would never have done such a thing. It's dishonorable."

"Excuse me, Miss Colfax!" said Mrs. Galloway, flushing.

"Goodness me!" the bishop murmured. Then in his professional voice he began an anecdote that figured in his favorite sermon; but, to his relief, Galloway entered the room again, and all eyes were turned upon him.

"He's been writing Willie a check," Varick suggested in a loud whisper. But he took no notice of Varick. He remained standing, one hand on the back of his chair, his napkin in the other. A smile puckered the corners of his mouth.

"I am informed," he said pleasantly, "that Tim, my stable-boy, has broken two legs, and that Albion, the horse I got from my friend Colfax to-day, has broken one. I ordered him tried on the steeplechase course, and he ran through the liverpool. They shot him. And Tim's mother, who is Mrs. Galloway's laundress, is going to

prosecute me. She says I had no business to put the boy on such a horse."

"Albion? Albion?" said Captain Forbes. "Is that the horse? Well, he *has* rather an ugly reputation. He ran through a jump over in Canada last year, and killed his jockey."

Another burst of laughter made the candle-flames tremble, and an unholy smile grew upon Mrs. Galloway's meek little mouth. It was a smile that made the bishop shudder and turn away his head. He glanced at Eleanor Colfax. Her face was expressionless. Her lips moved, but in the hubbub only he and Braybrooke heard.

"I am very sorry," she said, "that the little idiot broke his legs; but he probably pulled the horse into the jump. He can't ride, and never will be able to learn. Mr. Galloway should have known better than to trust him with the horse."

"That 's exactly it," Braybrooke assented, while the laughter of the others still rippled on.

"Bless me!" said the bishop to himself,

"this is extraordinary—most extraordinary! I beg pardon!" he exclaimed, recovering his senses and rising hastily, for the ladies were leaving the room.

During the rest of the evening Bishop Cunningham, the practised diner-out, opened not his mouth. When he eventually reached the haven of his bedchamber, he took up his diary, as he had done nightly for fifty years. Then he paused. The events of the day passed before his mind's eye like the unordered memories of a play: the red dog-cart, the tandem, the foppish youth who calmly guided the runaway horses and proposed they should enjoy it while it lasted; Mr. Galloway, his waistcoat, the jumping cow, and the peculiar incidents of the horse-trade; the tea-table, and the two fair young women.

The bishop had come to know many curious things about women, for he had known many women as the father confessor does; but he said to himself that these were a new sort. The picture of the girl rose before him as she looked when she stopped her wonderful playing to ask about

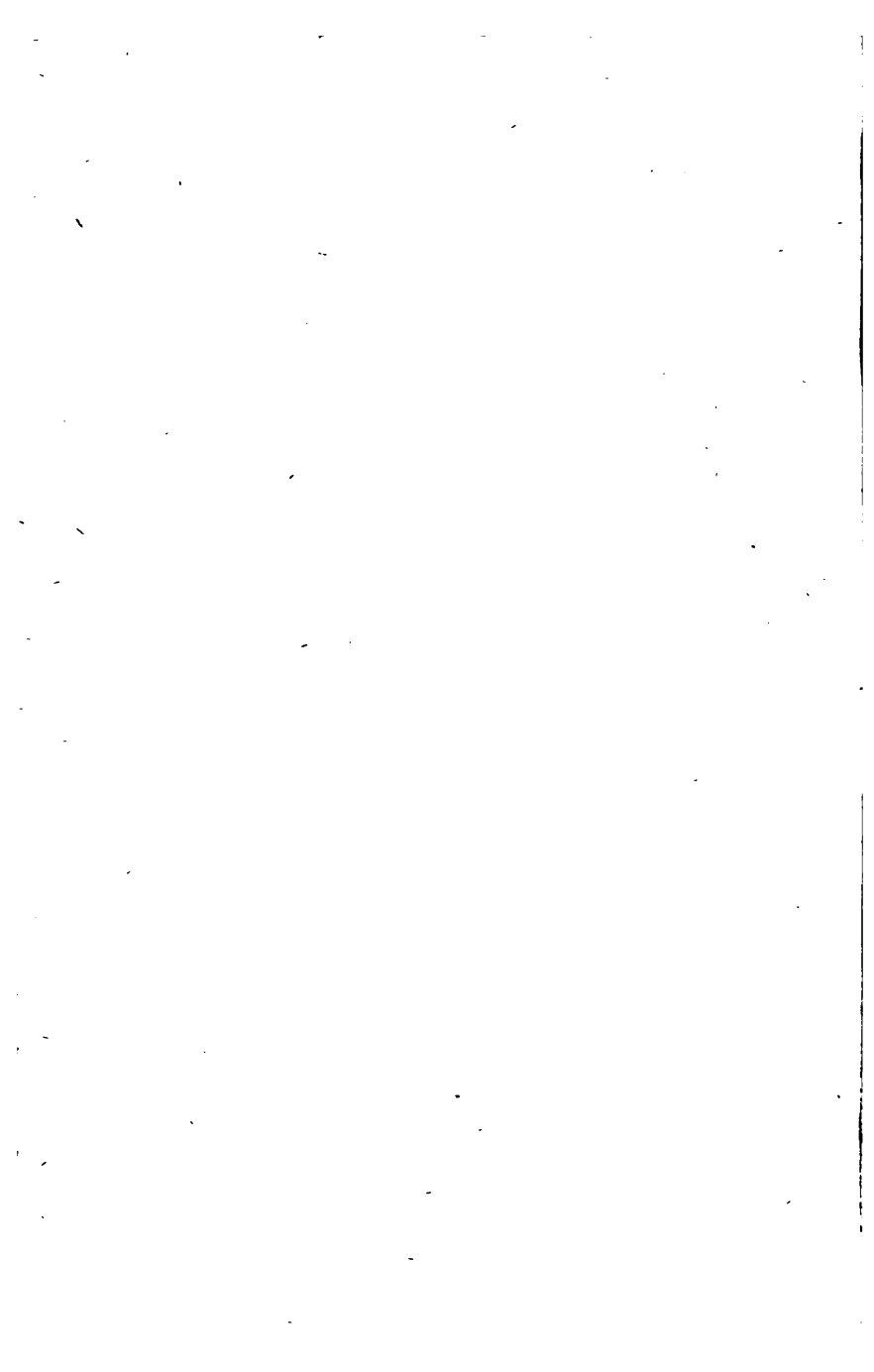
the chestnut cobs. He thought of her gentle gray eyes, and then of her words at the dinner-table when she heard about the boy's accident. "Has she two souls," he murmured, "or none?" From Eleanor Colfax his mind turned to Mrs. Galloway and the way she had smiled, and to her guests,—gentlefolk,—who talked of broken bones as one might talk of buttered muffins, and seemed to consider the legal doctrine of *caveat emptor* a pleasant matter of course in horse-trading. According to his habit, he labored to classify his impressions in the pigeonholes of his mind, and to index them, so to say, in his diary. How long he labored he knew not, but his efforts were vain. His thoughts came and went in a hopeless jumble, and the page lay blank before him. Suddenly he heard the tall clock in the lower hallway sound its prelude of muffled arpeggios, and then two low, throbbing strokes. He dipped his pen in the ink, and wrote hastily:

Oakdale, October the Twenty-fourth.—A most extraordinary day!

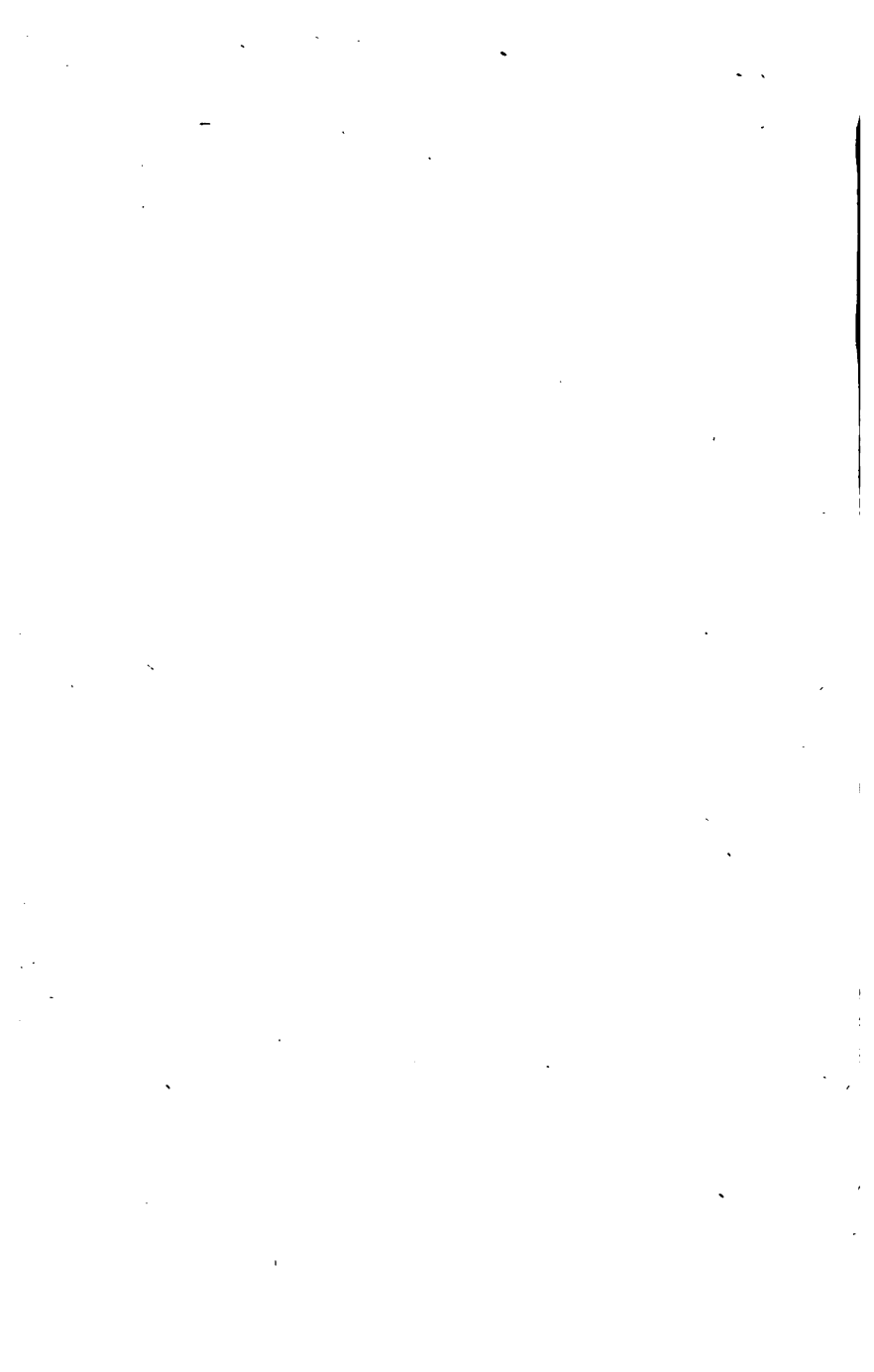
And below, as if in afterthought :

*Hast thou given the horse strength? hast thou
clothed his neck with thunder? (Job xxxix. 19.)*

Then, with a sigh, he closed the book.



**BRAYBROOKE'S DOUBLE-
EVENT STEEPLECHASE**



II

BRAYBROOKE'S DOUBLE-EVENT STEEPLE-CHASE

JIMMY BRAYBROOKE'S pony turned into the Hunt Club driveway, because it took a fancy to do so. The reins hung loose. Braybrooke was thinking about other things. Twenty minutes before, he had closed an interview with a certain girl which caused him more trouble than he had ever imagined there could be in the entire world. A lump ached in his throat, and there was a sick feeling lower down. It began to rain, and he took off his cap; the rain on his head was grateful. But it was all his own fault, he reflected; he had brought it on himself. Who was he, anyway?

He answered himself bitterly that he had never done anything but try to become a jockey, and had n't succeeded even at that; his own stable-boys laughed at his riding. A comforting friend might have pointed out that to a youth of twenty-four with twenty thousand a year much may be forgiven. If such an idea entered Braybrooke's mind, it passed quickly out. This was not that kind of girl. She wanted a man who could be somebody, or at least could do something. He reflected miserably on the years in which he had steadfastly baffled his educators.

"I can read," he groaned, "and spell with a dictionary, and that 's about the limit. I 'm a poor lot."

The pony took the path that led past the smoking-room. Braybrooke heard the sound of voices, and mechanically dismounted. Crossing the stirrups through the reins, he turned the horse toward the stable and moved noiselessly to the open window. Through the slats of the blinds he could look into the room without being seen.

"And what am I offered for that good

mare, Mrs. 'Awkins?" he heard some one bawl.

Mrs. Hawkins was his own mare. Varick was on the table, auctioning pools on the steeplechase that was to come off the next day for the great Oakdale Cup. They had made him auctioneer because he had a talent for imitating the speech of cockney touts. "Shut your eyes," Chalmers used to say, "and you 'd think you were at Guttenberg in the old days."

"Do I 'ear fifty?" cried Varick, sarcastically. "Only fifty for that lovely mare, and Mister Braybrooke hisself to ride?" A roar of laughter followed the mention of Braybrooke. "Believe me, gents, she's the faivrite, Mrs. 'Awkins—by Costermonger out of Lizer; and the only Mr. B. to pilot."

"I bid thirty cents," said Galloway, dryly.

"I say, is n't that a bit rough?" asked a quiet-looking young man. "If you don't mind, I 'll make it five dollars."

"Bless your generous heart!" said

Varick. "Do I hear six?" There was no response. "And sold for five dollars to Mr. Abercrombie."

"Who is a stranger," Galloway observed.

Abercrombie bowed his acknowledgments, and became the owner of Mrs. Hawkins's chances in the pool, which rapidly grew into a round sum.

"A good horse," Captain Forbes remarked to the purchaser; "but Braybrooke is a hoodoo."

The young man outside the window flushed.

"I am, am I?" he muttered. He went softly around the house and passed in. A volley of chaffing remarks greeted him.

"Your great race-horse is sold, O fortunate youth!" said Varick.

"Perhaps," said Braybrooke, quietly, "some of you fellows would like to bet. I'm backing my mare even against the field."

There was no difficulty in getting men to bet.

"Keep your money, my son," said

Chalmers, kindly, putting his hand on the young man's shoulder. For answer he made another entry in his note-book. Finally he remarked that he stood to win the price of a steam-yacht, and the consensus of sound sporting judgment was expressed by Varick.

"Providence," he said, "has sent this rich youth into a community with impaired incomes and refined ideas of both horse-flesh and living. It would be ingratitude to pass him by."

For this, Mrs. Innis, his widowed sister-in-law, called him a horrid brute, which was merely more evidence that Braybrooke needed sympathy and common sense.

THE verdict of the Oakdale Hunt on Braybrooke was neither biased nor harsh. He rode heavily, and badly for one who had ridden so much. His judgment led him wrong when he used it, and when he "went it blind," as he usually did, he was likely to perform foolhardy leaps and to commit surprising blunders. And, worst of all, he was truly unlucky. In the long

series of steeplechases held by the Hunt he had usually ridden favorites, and had regularly managed to get them beaten. He seemed incapable of remembering instructions. Several times he had ridden to the right of flags he should have passed on the left; twice his horse had fallen; and once, to his never-ending shame, he had fallen off his horse. Two years before, he had actually come in first, but dismounted before the judges gave him permission, was duly disqualified, and saw the second man take the cup. Mrs. Innis herself admitted that it was hard to imagine any course but a deep railroad-cut over which it would be possible for Brooky to win.

Therefore, when the bugle sounded, and the nine horses paraded past the line of four-in-hands and traps, no one took much notice of Braybrooke, except to wonder in which particular stupid way he was going to lose the race.

"It 's a pity," said Captain Forbes, who was not going to ride, and was on the Alden Adamses' yellow drag, "that the mare can't go over the course with a

dummy up. She 's uncommon fit, and she knows enough to win by herself; but it 's a good deal to ask of a horse to have brains for two."

The tall girl on the box beside him turned her back, and began polishing the lenses of her field-glass.

As the riders came up for the start, Braybrooke knit his brow, and labored to recall the parting words of his trainer. Conolly had said:

"Keep her head far to the right at the brushed hurdle, sir. It 's a bit higher there, but she 's took a dislike to the hole in the brush on the left, and she 'll refuse."

To Braybrooke those words were mere sounds. His eyes kept wandering down the line of four-in-hands toward the yellow coach. He shut them, and turned his head away. He called himself a fool. Then the mare reared impatiently, and he began to feel the excitement of the thing. He found himself repeating, "The hole—the brushed hurdle—the hole—the brushed hurdle," till the words lost all semblance

of sense. The starter called out to him sharply. He turned back into line, and set his teeth.

The flag dropped, and nine eager horses broke away together. Braybrooke found himself galloping easily in the middle of the bunch, the mare well within herself. She drew ahead slightly, even under his heavy pull. It was plain that she was the speediest of the lot; the question was, could she stay?

The field strung out as it swept on to the first jump, for the cautious were willing to wait for a lead. In front with Braybrooke, and to his left, was Chalmers on Tomahawk; to his right was Willie Colfax on Canterbury. The three took the hurdle almost together. Presently Mrs. Hawkins began to draw away, and she was galloping so handily that Braybrooke let her cut out the pace.

"A mile of this will do for Tomahawk," Chalmers said anxiously to Colfax, who was still by his side.

"It 's no place for this nag," was the answer. "Let Brooky go. He 'll ride

out soon. When he gets ahead he always feels lost." Braybrooke, however, kept steadily on, and flew the water-jump ten lengths in the lead.

The course led around the great meadow, over a broad ditch, over another hurdle, and then, with a curving sweep, on to the liverpool. Chalmers and Colfax still galloped abreast. Each believed that he had "the legs" of the other on the run in, and was glad that his opponent did not force the pace in order to stay with Mrs. Hawkins.

Braybrooke was now twenty good lengths in front, and, barring accidents, obviously had the race, for the mare was still rating along under a pull. But the knowing spectators who were following the race with their glasses had seen the same thing too often before to be anxious about their bets against Braybrooke.

"Two to one," said Chalmers, who was beginning to pant, "that he goes off at the liverpool."

"No takers," gasped Colfax, with a grin; but the mare never swerved as she raced

at the ugly jump; she flew rail, ditch, and hurdle grandly, and was on again. A cry of admiration burst from Chalmers. Colfax saved his breath. He was shortening his reins and settling back in the saddle. It is absorbing to go at a stiff liverpool, twenty miles an hour, on a horse that is no longer fresh. Both cleared it, but Mrs. Hawkins was still stretching out her lead.

"Afraid we 're done for," puffed Chalmers. Colfax nodded. The same idea was passing through Braybrooke's mind. "I 've got 'em beaten this time," he murmured. He smiled and stood forward in the stirrups, fancying that he was "riding light." The course turned abruptly, and the brushed hurdle came in sight.

"Here 's the hole," he muttered. There was a bitten-out piece in the brush at the left, and he began to ride for it. As he afterward observed, he ought to have discharged Conolly for mentioning the matter at all. When a person tells you about a hole in a fence while you are mounting, you would be an ass to inquire whether you were meant to profit by it; naturally,

it would never occur to anybody that you were meant to avoid it and to jump big.

Mrs. Hawkins began to pull off toward the right, but Braybrooke gathered her firmly and drove her for the low place with the spur. The trainer, who was at the finish with his master's glass, turned his back.

Then happened what is likely to happen when a thoroughbred horse is driven at something it does not want to jump. Throwing her head up angrily, Mrs. Hawkins swerved sharply away from the hurdle and crashed into the high wing on the side. Braybrooke, not anticipating this, continued on alone and took the hurdle at the low place. A hushed cry of apprehension ran through the distant crowd. The knowing ones laughed to themselves, and felt relieved about their bets. Braybrooke staggered to his feet, dazed but uninjured.

"Wonderful leap!" called out Colfax as, a moment later, he and Chalmers, still side by side, swept over.

Braybrooke reached his horse as she

was disentangling herself from the remains of the fence. By some freak of chance the end of a splintered board had caught through the head-stall. With a vicious jerk of her head the band slipped over her ears, the throat-latch broke, and she tore herself free. Braybrooke gasped. He was standing beside a horse without bridle or reins. Varick, on Good Morning, slashed by him. He glanced at the horses in front, at the field thundering up behind. Then he pushed the mare's head toward the jump, and vaulted into the saddle.

"Get off!" he heard some one cry from behind. He only gripped the harder with his knees; but he knew what it meant—three jumps at the end of a race, with neither bit nor rein to steady a tiring horse.

Following Good Morning, Mrs. Hawkins bucked from a standstill over the brush at its highest point, and started after the leaders. The blood of twenty grandfathers and of the Godolphin Arab back of them was running in her veins. She was a race-

horse, and she kept the track. In a few strides she went by Good Morning, and threw pieces of turf into that weary gelding's face, which disgusted him mightily and his rider more. Varick dismally thought of his long odds.

Colfax was about eight lengths ahead. The mare's wonderful pace held on. As they swung into the stretch she passed him. Chalmers was flogging Tomahawk, still three lengths in the lead. He thought Colfax was coming up. For a moment he held his own, and the cry "Tomahawk wins!" began to come from the carriages.

But Tomahawk had done his best; his tail was waving the distress-signal; and Mrs. Hawkins began steadily closing up. Such a burst had never been seen on the Oakdale meadow before. Twenty yards from the flags, Chalmers looked bewildered as he saw the mare's little head, innocent of harness, forge past his saddle. He forgot to flog Tomahawk, but it mattered little; Tomahawk was a beaten horse.

Braybrooke, sitting immovable as a statue, shot a clear length in advance, and

passed between the flags, while the hysterical shouting that greets the winner roared down the line.

An excited crowd thronged the track, and a hundred pairs of hands stretched out officiously to catch the bridleless mare. She kicked one man on the knee-cap. After that they gave her room, and she followed the joyous Conolly toward the judges.

Then a tall, slender girl jumped from the box of the yellow coach and struggled through the crowd. The little mare was standing quietly, her flanks heaving, her nostrils flecked with foam. Her eyes were bloodshot, but there was a mild dignity in them—a look that said, "I have run a race." The girl made her way to the horse, shot a swift glance at Braybrooke, and flung her arms about his mount's dripping neck. The crowd faded out from Braybrooke's eyes, the hubbub died away in his ears. His senses were lost for the time in a great thrill which the look in the girl's gray eyes sent through him.

"You 've spoiled your dress," he said.

Then the girl blushed, and drew back in the crowd. Scores of hands shook his, but it was as if they had not. He was the hero of the day, but the victory seemed strangely different from the thing he had imagined so often. He weighed in mechanically, and passing his hand across his eyes, followed the mare toward the trap where the blankets were.

"The fall must have shaken him up," he heard some one say. Perhaps it had. The crowding figures seemed far off and strange. He put his face to the mare's sweaty neck where the girl's arms had been, and kissed it. Forbes smiled. "She 's won his first race for him," he said to the man with him, who was a visitor. "Good boy, Jimmy!" he added to Braybrooke, and Braybrooke nodded absently.

The stable-boys put the blankets on, and asked him if he wished anything special done for the mare. He told them to spray her off knee,—she had rapped it going into the wing of the jump,—and

they led her away. A stiffness in the region of his shoulder-blades gave warning that he himself was going to have a lame back. Conolly, who had lingered, noted his cautious experiments with the bruised muscles.

"They say you went over pretty fast, sir," he observed, "but I did n't see it meself. I turned me back, sir, when I see you making for the hole."

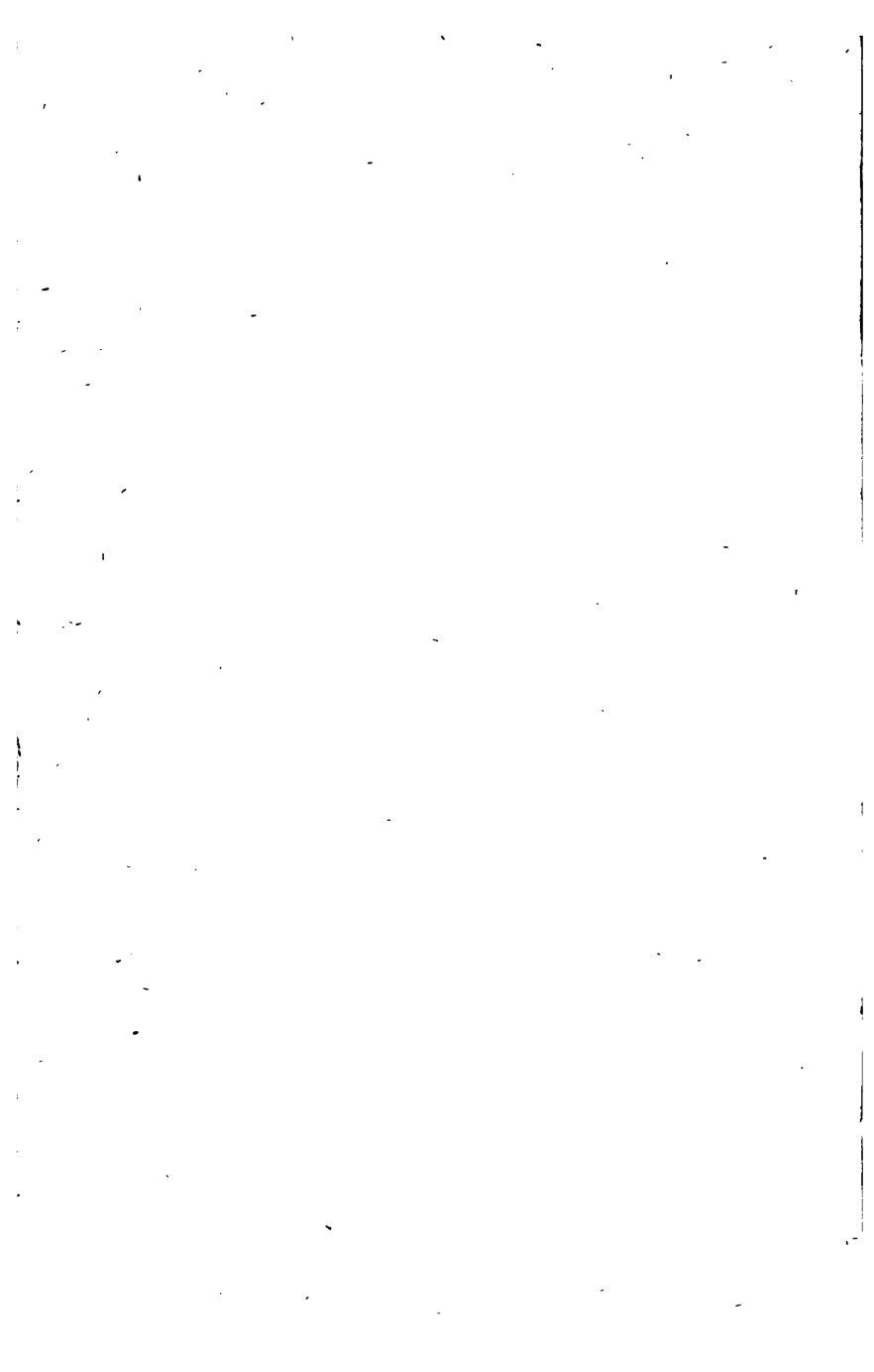
"Conolly," said Braybrooke, "if you had n't mentioned the hole I should have jumped the high place and never got tangled up in the wing. But, then,—you probably think, whether you say it to me or not,—the mare would n't have lost her bridle, and I should have got out of the course as usual. I don't agree with you, but I think I 'll have to raise your wages."

The man touched his hat impassively. "It 's a great cup you 've won, sir," he said.

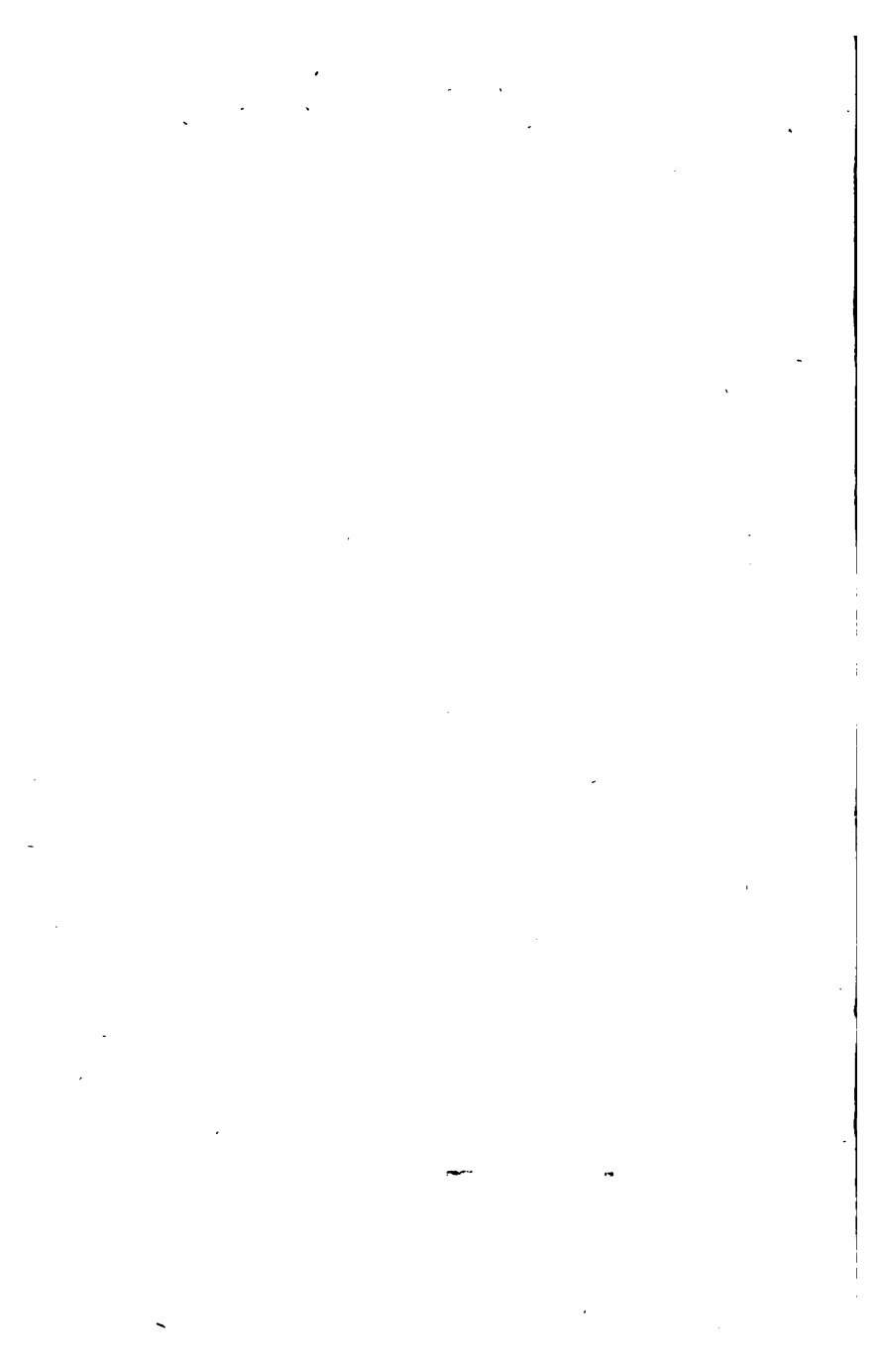
"You 're right," said Braybrooke; "it is."

And so it was. They christened it that night at the Alden Adamses' dinner.

Varick made a mysterious speech, and named it the Great Double-Event Cup. But by that time everybody at the dinner knew what the second event was, so no one was really mystified, and Miss Colfax began to receive good wishes and "God bless you" glances before Varick gave his "double toast" and called on "the winner" to respond.



**HOW THE FENCE-BREAKERS'
LEAGUE WAS "STUMPED"**



III

HOW THE FENCE-BREAKERS' LEAGUE WAS "STUMPED"

THE morals and practices of the Fence-Breakers' League had reached a point where they demanded and had received the attention of the officers of the Hunt. It is sound hunting doctrine to ride straight when the hounds are running, and to turn aside only for wire and wheat: for wire, because a man is supposed to consider his horse, whether he considers himself or not; for wheat, because in America fox-hunting exists by the courtesy of free and independent landowners. But when the pack is not in cry the authorities hold it bad manners to endanger the fences by choosing the highest

panels, and immoral to jump at all when there are open gates.

In the Oakdale Hunt there was a 'faction of unbalanced youth which violated these precepts, at first on the sly, then openly and without shame. It is a great pity that all the best sports should be subject to the same corrupting evil—the rivalry of the reckless. With polo and hunting it develops dangerously, and is usually cured only by some one getting seriously broken. When a master of foxhounds notes "jealous riding" he begins to tremble for his puppies, which are in danger of being ridden down, and to prepare himself for an era of accidents and agrarian difficulties.

The Fence-Breakers' League exemplified this evil in its most virulent form. Their name had been given as a stigma, in the vain hope that it might shame them into mending their ways. They accepted it, however, as a distinction, proceeded to organize, to elect officers, and to institute weekly dinners, of which the less said the better. It was after one of these dinners

that the great Moonlight Steeplechase was run.

Captain Forbes, with the interests of the Hunt at heart, undertook to remonstrate privately with Varick.

"This thing is causing no end of trouble," he said. "You have broken half the fences in the county, and the farmers are mad clean through. I can understand those fool boys acting in such a way, but I really am surprised that you should encourage them." Varick was thirty-five, and might have been a brilliant lawyer if he had not chosen to jeer at the earnestness of a utilitarian generation, and to become an indifferent horse-jockey.

"Forbes," said he, "you are a man whom youth overlooked."

"Bosh!" said the captain; "do be serious."

"You are beguiling me to disparage that generous disregard of consequences which gives life its poetry and hope. However, I could n't stop the thing if I wanted to. You know as well as I do that boys who jump oak gates when no

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one is looking are not open to argument. Take Galloway. Galloway is unaffectedly insane about horses. He thinks and dreams of nothing else; and it is as much to him to take his black mare over something no one else will jump as it is for a doctor to find a new disease. He keeps a diary of all his fences over five feet, goes back next day with a tape, and, when possible, kodaks them too. He intends to publish a work entitled, 'Fences I have Jumped.' Can I conscientiously urge him to renounce all that makes life worth while for him, and would he renounce it if I did? The rest of the crowd are all more or less on the same pattern—excepting myself."

"Well," said Forbes, who was getting impatient, "what are you?"

"I am an Epicurean philosopher. I jump things because I am afraid; and the pleasure I experience when I am over is worth an occasional spill. I also like to be thought something of a devil. Besides, you and Crawford"—Crawford was the M. F. H.—"take fox-hunting with such

elaborate seriousness, and are such children of dogma, that I encourage schism and strife simply for the joy of it. Forbes, I might have been a great revolutionist—"

"You be blanked!" said the captain, and departed. This ended the effort to abate the Fence-Breakers' League by means of sweet reasonableness.

"The tomb yawns for them," said the M. F. H. when he heard Forbes's story; "and I am half sorry it has been disappointed so long. This Hunt is becoming intolerable for decent hunting-men."

Then the governors imposed fines for breakage till the club bank-account swelled to unrecognizable proportions; but the Fence-Breakers' League paid with cheerfulness.

"We are now indebted to no man," Varick explained; "and a great deal of money is not to be compared with the satisfaction of self-respect. The tedium of drawing blank coverts loses its terror when a man can hear his horse's hind feet trail through a board fence without a pang of conscience." And so the Fence-

Breakers' League grew steadily more demoralized and demoralizing.

Said the master, finally: "I am afraid only sudden death will stop this nonsense. Of course it is prejudicial to the sport to have people killed, but in this case I think it would be best."

The following Saturday the Fence-Breakers' League were gathered in the club smoking-room, discussing the probability of a dull afternoon, while they waited for the hounds. On Saturdays there were bigger fields, and wretched one-day-a-week men who came down from town were sure to get in the way and crowd. Besides, it was too dry to expect good scent.

"This is the kind of afternoon," said Galloway, "when you insult a good horse by taking him out." A flabby young man who was not among the half-dozen of the Fence-Breakers' League agreed with him.

"On dry days," said he, "Crawford ought to give us a point-to-point for a sweepstake cup."

Galloway smiled, because this young

man was apt to be taken ill before a steeplechase. But the talk stopped, for the M. F. H. himself unexpectedly entered, followed by a stranger.

"Here, Charley," said he, "I want you to know some of these fellows. When you get lost this afternoon, they will look after you." He called off the names of the group of men, while the stranger acknowledged the introductions with stiff nods. Just then a cracking of whips in the distance told the M. F. H. that the hounds had started from the kennels, and he hurried out.

The M. F. H. was absent-minded, and apt to introduce people in this one-sided fashion; and he often produced exceedingly queer persons, such as are rarely seen in a hunting-country. He had been at school in England, and had lived pretty much everywhere. Varick used to say that he had met chums of Crawford's all the way from the North Cape to Fiji.

The stranger who had thus been intrusted to the keeping of the Fence-Breakers' League was a short, insignificant-looking man, about fifty, with a red,

smoothly shaven face and small white hands. Instead of top-boots and proper hunting-things, he wore tweed breeches, with gaiters, and a rough shooting-coat. This coat was peculiar. Its skirts were cut back so little that they hid the thighs, suggesting a frock-coat rather than a cut-away. When the man walked he limped stiffly, and two curious loops showed on his right breeches' leg just below the hip. They were like the loops sewed on the waistband of breeches to hold a belt.

It was obvious that the newcomer was something odd. It was also clear that he was not a hunting-man, for the M. F. H. had referred to his getting lost as a matter of course. Committing him to the care of the Fence-Breakers' League under these circumstances seemed a rather merciless practical joke, but the M. F. H. had a weakness for such jokes.

Galloway was next to the newcomer, and felt called upon to make conversation; also, he was not without a healthy curiosity to find out who the man was.

"Pretty hot," Galloway began.

"Yes," said the stranger; "too hot to ride much."

"Your first time in the Oakdale country?"

"Yes."

"Brought any horses down?"

"No."

"Seen the hounds yet?"

"No."

"Pretty fair pack. Got ten new couples from the Earl of Reddesdale's kennels."

"Yes, I know."

"Had more rain in your country?"

"Yes."

"Too dry here for much sport."

"Yes; too dry, quite."

"Have something to drink?"

"Thanks, no."

"Excuse me, I will"; and Galloway beat a retreat to the lunch-room.

"Well," said Varick, who had followed him, "your friend is hardly garrulous."

Galloway scowled. "This," said he, "is the last time I shall try to make things pleasant for people I don't know. What do you suppose that fellow is?"

"Some little painter-man, I dare say; sticks his brushes through those straps on his trousers' leg. He probably feels bashful, and out of it, with so much horse all around. You ought to have talked art at him."

"Well," said Galloway, "I am not revengeful; but, all the same, I think I owe him one out of self-respect. If I get the chance, I shall treat that painter-man to a few thrills. Let 's have another look at him." They went to the door of the smoking-room. The stranger was in a corner by the window, with a book.

"That 's our copy of Tennyson," said Varick; "I know the cover. Perhaps he 's a poet."

"If I can get him to jump," said Galloway, "I sha'n't care what he is. Still, a leaping poet would be especially worth encouraging. Hello! there 's the horn." They hurried out to their horses, mounted, and followed the pack down the drive.

The day was too dry for scent, as had been foreseen. The field potted about from one blank covert to another, and the

members of the Fence-Breakers' League endeavored to work off their restlessness by such means as were at hand. They "larked" five-foot rails and regulation four-boarders, plain and with ditch accompaniments. They tackled all the stone walls that seemed worthy, and enjoyed themselves generally, rousing the envy of such as would have liked to imitate them but were afraid, and exciting the disgust of the mature. Finally the league resolved to pull out in a body, in order to express their censure of the M. F. H. for offering such wretched sport, and "to take a ride." Only the long-suffering farmers across whose lands the course of these Fence-Breakers' "rides" have lain can do them justice. The motto which Varick had bestowed upon the society was *Fit via vi*, and classicists translate it, "A way is made by force." But the M. F. H. said he preferred Willie Colfax's personal version, "Fits by the way," although either rendering was appropriate.

"Varick," said Galloway, "start the procession for the meadow bridge, and

I'll get that poet chap to come along. Keep the road as far as you can, and don't jump anything till we get across. My conscience is clear, for Crawford has put him up on the Duke." This was the master's very best horse.

The meadow bridge belonged to a farmer who owned the land on both sides of the stream, and was chiefly used to take his cattle from one pasture to the other. The banks were too steep to climb, and the river was too deep to ford, even if there had been a path down to it. Beyond the bridge, and between it and the village, was a series of the stiffest, biggest post-and-rail fences in the county. A man who rode over this course needed a good horse and a big heart, or—what sometimes passes for the same thing—a big flask. They called it the "devil's run."

Galloway found the stranger, looking badly bored, on the edge of a piece of woods which the master was drawing. The breeze flapped his coat skirts back, and showed a stout strap passed through the mysterious loops on his right breeches' leg.

"Ruptured muscle, I guess," muttered Galloway to himself. "Perhaps I ought n't to—" But he conquered his scruples and unfolded his proposition.

"Too late for anything to-day. Half a dozen of us are going to pull out, and I thought you might like to come along. Crawford 's so mad at not finding that he 's likely to stop out all night. Instead of going back over the iron bridge we 'll cross three miles lower down. Pretty bits of scenery all along. Better come."

"Much obliged," said the stranger. "I think I will. This is slow." He started his horse, rising awkwardly to the long trot, and Galloway rode beside him, gloating.

"Charming vista, is n't it?" he said, judging it best to give his conversation an artistic flavor. "I suppose you are fond of landscape."

"I want my tea," said the stranger. "Crawford overlooked lunch completely."

Galloway was somewhat taken aback. "Well, the way we are going is a short cut," he observed. For the first time that day the stranger's countenance relaxed

into something like a smile. "I 've touched his stomach," thought Galloway; "he 'll come."

They overtook the rest of the party and turned into the river road. Varick had explained what was on foot, and the Fence-Breakers' League hacked along as decorously as a riding-school class in the park. Here and there a wall, here and there a line of wicked-looking pickets, tempted Galloway sorely; but he conquered his desires. He even reproved Willie Colfax, who weakly suggested just one two-dollar competition over a lovely new oak gate. Had the M. F. H. been there, he would have doubted his senses.

The light of the short October afternoon failed rapidly, and it was almost dusk when they reached the bridge. Varick was riding ahead, and started out over the rather crazy structure. Suddenly he pulled up short.

"Here 's a mess!" he exclaimed; "this thing is open."

The owner had taken up a dozen boards to prevent the cattle from crossing. Forty

feet below was the water, looking dismally black. Galloway rode out, surveyed the situation, and came back swearing eloquently in subdued tones. There was no talk of jumping. A slip at the take-off, the least mistake, and horse and man would rattle down through the underpinning into the water.

"The devil!" said Galloway, soulfully; and he gazed at the distant lines of fence, and the village spires beyond them, dim against the sky.

"It 's sure death," said Varick. "It 's twelve feet, if it 's an inch; and I am too old to die. We might as well get started back, for it 's six miles around to the other bridge."

The stranger, who had inspected the gap, only half heard. He rode alongside of Galloway.

"How far to the other bridge?" he asked.

"Six miles," replied Galloway, sourly.

"Six miles!" he exclaimed. "Oh, I say, I should never get my tea!" Without another word, he clapped in his spurs,

and shot out upon the bridge under full steam. A gasp of horror broke from the knot of men.

"You can't make it!" shrieked Varick. The Duke gave a mighty spring, and was over, with something to spare. There was an instant's clatter on the boards, and the stranger was checking his horse in the farther meadow. He turned and looked back. Then he called out, with no change in the tone of his dry voice:

"Any one coming?"

No one answered. He pointed toward Oakdale, and called again:

"Is that the village?"

Again there was no answer, and he rode away. Without speaking, they watched him canter across the meadow, clear the first of the big fences, and fade into a small dark object in the twilight.

"The Lord deliver us!" said Varick. "Who is that man?"

But no one was any wiser than he, and there seemed no disposition to speculate idly. The Fence-Breakers' League had

been "stumped," and by a man they had presumed to be an esthete. The disgrace was galling, and the mind of Galloway was filled with particularly bitter reflections. They started back, and presently saw Captain Forbes coming toward them. He was making for the bridge.

"You can't get over," said Colfax.

"Unless you happen to have a balloon," added Varick.

When Forbes gathered what had happened he laughed as he had not laughed in twenty years; and the Fence-Breakers' League listened, glum and angry.

"Have you ever heard of Charley Pelham, the Earl of Reddesdale?" he asked.

Now, every hunting-man knows the fame of the hunting Earl of Reddesdale, who rides with his wooden leg strapped to the saddle.

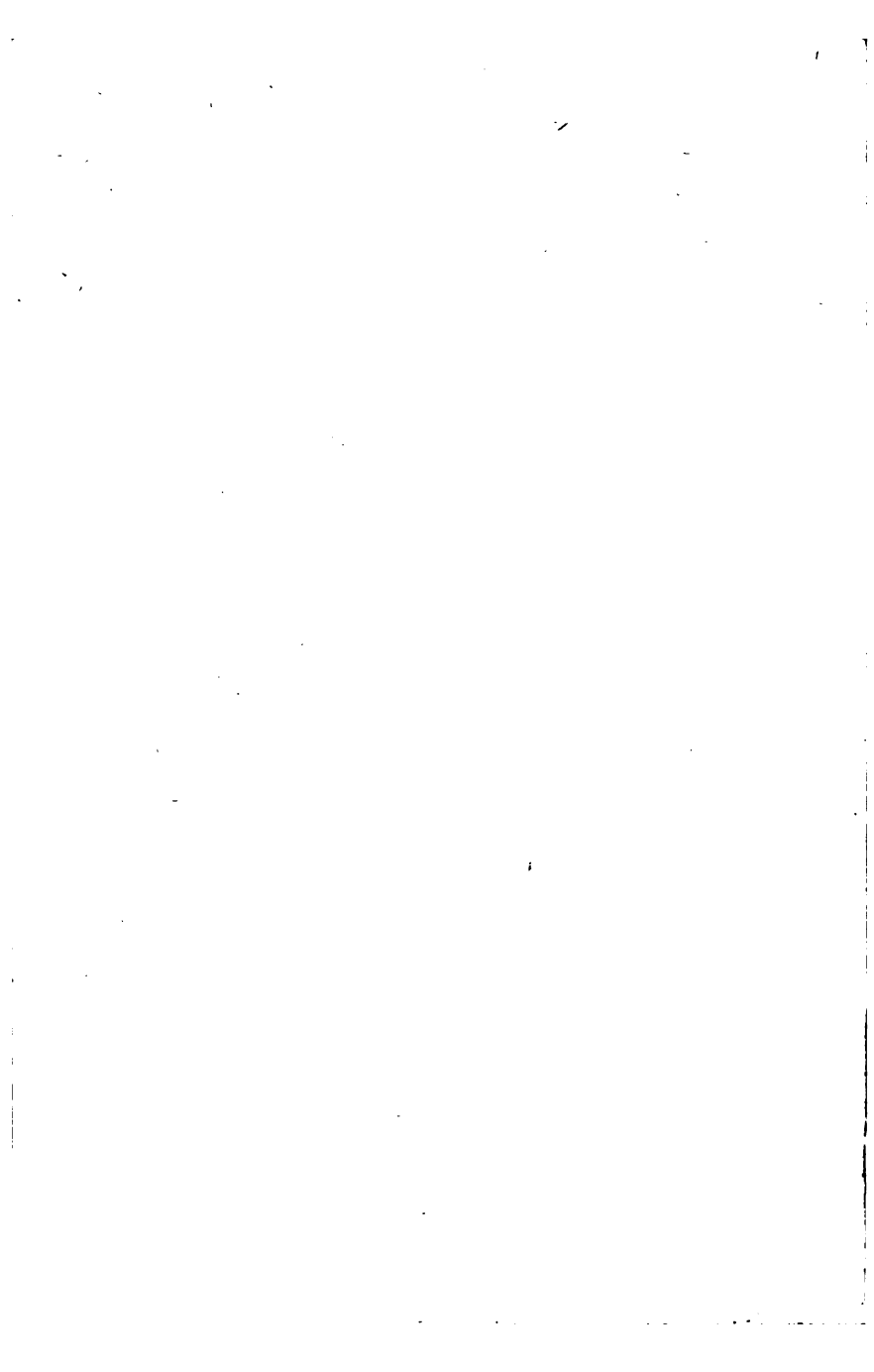
The Fence-Breakers' League kept silence. They were ashamed of themselves. Finally Galloway spoke:

"What can we do about it? Give him a dinner?"

"No," said Varick, glancing at Forbes ;
"disband."

"I second that motion," said Willie Colfax, gruffly ; and the Fence-Breakers' League then and there disbanded.

THE RIDE OF HIS LIFE



IV

THE RIDE OF HIS LIFE

CORDILLAS Y SANDOVAL was an attaché of the Spanish legation, whom Varick invited to Oakdale to please Mrs. Varick and, more especially, her widowed sister.

"I believe I met him once at the club in Washington," Varick remarked. "I thought he was rather an ass; but we've plenty of stable-room. Does he hunt?"

Mrs. Innis, the sister-in-law, was afraid he did,—in a hunting-country men who do not ride are at a premium,—but was uncertain about it; therefore upon his arrival the question was referred to Cordillas himself.

The Spaniard dashed Mrs. Innis's hopes.

He asserted that he was "practised in equestrianism," and "worshiped horses."

"Yes, and I haf yoomp, too," he added. Then he branched off on the merits of his "fiery-eyed steed" in Madrid, which he was bound to believe would make an unparalleled "yoomper," although, as there was no fox-hunting in his country, its ability had never been called out.

"I can see," said Varick, pleasantly interrupting, "that you are the man for us. I shall put you up on that good horse Thomas Dooley." There was duplicity in this, for Varick distrusted the horsemanship of all Latin foreigners; but the Spaniard suspected it not, and the sister-in-law discreetly held her peace.

Thomas Dooley, at the time when fate introduced him to Cordillas, was going on seventeen, and he knew more about getting across a hunting-country than men usually acquire in half a century. His ancestry was not dicussed, but he had the best box-stall in Varick's stable, and would be gloriously pensioned when his time of service expired. Ten years back he

had exchanged the plow for the saddle, as the result of a memorable humiliation which he put upon the entire Oakdale Hunt. One dismal, sloppy morning Dooley had appeared at a meet, ridden by a farmer's boy. Not long after the hounds had found, twenty angry men were sitting on as many sulky, discouraged horses in a deep-plowed field waiting for some one to break the fence in front of them. They were not soothed when they saw Dooley playfully switch his flowing tail over five feet of new oak rails, and disappear after the pack. Varick had been one of these men; and that same afternoon he possessed Thomas Dooley, who ever since had carried him with unerring judgment and ability. As the years went by, Dooley came to be known as Varick's "morning-after" horse, and he never betrayed the confidence this title implied. Nevertheless, it must be said that, for a man whose nerves had not been outraged, Dooley could hardly be called an agreeable mount.

He was, by general admission, the plainest horse that ever followed hounds. His

legs and feet were coarse, and he galloped with as much spring as if he were on stilts. The mighty quarters wherein dwelt his genius for getting over high timber were so much too big for him that he seemed to have got another horse's hind legs by mistake. He had a mouth no bit could conquer. He chose what he would jump, and how, regardless of his rider. Only the certainty that he would never fall made him venerated, and most persons who hunt resent the imputation that they need this kind of horse. If a man's heart is strong with sleep and November air, there is little satisfaction in being carried over the country by a machine.

When Cordillas made his first appearance on Thomas Dooley, it was noted that he rode with uncommonly long stirrup-leathers,—too long for hunting,—and sat as stiff as a horse-guard, bouncing dismally with Thomas's hard trot. The tails of his pink coat were unsullied by the loin-sweat of the chase, and there was no mark of stirrup-iron across the instep of his freshly treed boots.

"'E 's quite noo," remarked the first whip, in an undertone.

"With Thomas," replied the huntsman, "'e won't be long noo."

The hounds found unexpectedly, and the advice Varick intended to give his guest was cut short.

"Don't try to steer him at his fences," he yelled; "it won't do any good." The next moment the rattle-headed four-year-old he was riding took off in a bit of marsh, and became mixed up with a panel of boards. Varick got up in time to see Dooley bucking over from good ground, his rider with him, although well on toward his ears.

"I guess he 'll do; he 's got to," said Varick, softly swearing at his muddled boots. He scrambled up into the saddle, saw his guest slide back into his, and together they swept on after the hounds.

For the most part, Cordillas managed to remain inconspicuous, though he took a spectacular "voluntary" on the way back to the kennels. He tried to "lark" Dooley over a wayside fence, possibly for

the benefit of Mrs. Innis, who was driving by in her cart. Dooley, knowing that the jump was needless, stopped at the fence and the Spaniard went over alone; but his heart seemed to be in the right place, and he got up again, laughing.

The next time he went out, on a hint from Varick he shortened his leathers, thrust his feet home through the irons, and really did very creditably. He was good-looking, and had nice manners; and Mrs. Innis was so complimentary that by the end of the week he believed himself the keenest man in the field. But as he grew in confidence he also became aware of the reputation which his mount enjoyed. He began to hint to Varick that Dooley was not a suitable horse for him.

"If I only had my prancer here," he observed, one morning, "you would see yoomping." Finally he told his host point-blank that, however well meant it might be, to give him such a tame mount as Dooley was no kindness; it was a reflection upon his equestrianism.

Then said Varick, who was annoyed,

"You may ride Emperor to-morrow; but I tell you plainly that he may kill you." For the moment, he almost hoped he would.

"Fear not," said Cordillas, and thanked him much.

Varick says that he did *not* forget to tell William to have Emperor saddled for Cordillas. The head groom refuses to talk about it, but shakes his head. Those who know William hesitate to decide between him and his master, so the truth is likely to remain hid.

At the meet next morning, Cordillas flabbergasted the stable-boy who assisted him to mount by slipping a bill into his hand.

"An' 'im a halien," said the boy, as he related the matter to William. "Then 'e pats 'is neck, an' sez 'e, 'Ain't 'e a good 'un! Gawd! look at 'is fiery heye! This is a 'oss!' 'W'y, yes,' sez I; 'an' clipped yesterday, sir, which improves 'is looks uncommon. I might almost say, sir, one 'u'd scaicely know 'im.' Then 'e sez, 'Git up, Hemperor!' an' moves awfter 'em."

That day there was vouchsafed one of those "historic" runs which come usually when a man's best horse is laid up, or when he judges that the day is too dry for scent and stops at home. In the first covert the pack blundered on a fox, and burst wildly out of the woods, every hound giving tongue, and Reynard in full view, barely half a field away.

The men sat listening to the foxhounds' "music," half-eager bark, half-agonized yelp, with a fluttering of the pulses and a stirring of primeval instincts. The horses quivered and pawed, mouthed the bits, and tossed white slaver into the air. But the hounds had to get their distance; so the field held back, each man intently studying the far-off fence, and playing with the mouth of his restless horse. The excited Spaniard tugged on the curb, and his mount reared indignantly.

"Demon!" he shouted. A snicker rippled from the grooms in the rear.

"Good Lord!" exclaimed Varick. "He has n't done that for eight years. Give him his head, man!"

At that instant the M. F. H. waved his hand, and the field charged across the meadow for the boards, over which the tail-end hounds were scrambling.

It was seven miles without a check to Christian's Mills, and the fox most of the time in view; then across the river, horses and hounds swimming together, and on again at a heartbreaking pace to Paddock's Gully, where they killed in the bottom. Three horses that went into the ravine were too pumped to get out again, and stayed there all night. In the memory of man such a run, without slow scent or check, had never been seen. It became the great after-dinner run of the Oakdale Hunt; and when they brag of their horses, they tell how, twice in the twelve miles, eleven men jumped five feet of stiff timber without breaking a rail.

In the last mile Cordillas followed the insane Braybrooke over four strands of naked wire that turned the field aside, beat him into the ravine, and was first at the death. They came upon him half buried in the yelping, panting pack which

fought for the mangled fox he held over his head.

"Beat 'em off!" yelled Braybrooke. The reply was a torrent of Spanish oaths. Then the huntsman rode up, and rescued Cordillas, plastered with blood and filth, but content. He patted his mount's dripping neck.

"How magnificent a horse!" he exclaimed.

"Carried you extremely well," said Braybrooke. "Never saw the old fellow do better, or show so much speed. Great gallop, was n't it? Let 's have a pull at your flask; mine 's dry."

"To the run," said the Spaniard, as he received the flask back, "and your good health!" He clutched the mask in his other hand.

"You rode well," said Braybrooke. His respect for the Latin races had increased. "The blood 's dripping on your coat," he added, as Galloway came up, but Cordillas only held his trophy closer.

THAT night Varick had a man's dinner.

There were toasts and healths, and bumpers to the five-foot fences, and perdition to the man who invented wire ; bumpers to every good horse and man who was out that day ; long life to hounds, and good luck to all hound puppies. But the Spaniard was the lion of the evening, and toward midnight there were cries of "Speech!"

Cordillas rose cautiously, and stood facing the party, with a glass of champagne in his tremulous hand. He was touched, and his voice showed it. He thanked the company as a gentleman, as a Spaniard, and as a sportsman. He spoke in praise of his hosts' country, their women, and their bath-tubs. Then he got around to his prancer in Madrid, and settled down to horses. To an equestrian like himself, he said, whose bosom throbbed in sympathy with every fiery impulse of creation's most noble animal, the fox-chase was the sport of kings. To a distinguished company of huntsmen he might well repeat the words of the English poet, with which they might be familiar, "My kingdom for a horse!" Developing his theme, he as-

sented that, of the various kinds of horses, the hunter was the noblest. "And of all noble hunters," he shouted, "the noblest, the fieriest, the most intrepid, I haf rode to-day! I drink to Emperor!"

At that moment Thomas Dooley, the newly clipped, was sniffing a bran mash, stiff and sore with the weariness born of his day's exertions under Cordillas y Sandoval. As every one at the table except the Spaniard knew, Emperor had not been out of his stall.

There was a moment's hush. The toast was drunk in silence. The men looked at one another, and then a tumult of cheers burst forth which set the grooms waiting at the stables to speculating upon the probable condition of their masters. To Cordillas it was an ovation, and the climax of his triumph. The tears stood in his eyes. To the Oakdale Hunt it was the only way of saving appearances and their good breeding.

"Keep the racket going," said Forbes to Braybrooke. "Don't let him know any one's laughing."

"I shall die of this," gasped Willie Colfax; and he slipped under the table, gurgling hysterically.

What else might have happened no one can say, because Charley Galloway started "For he 's a jolly good fellow!" at the top of his lungs. Mrs. Galloway, who was sitting up for him in her own house half a mile down the road, says she recognized her husband's barytone. Every other man did the best that nature permitted. The Spaniard was reduced to tears, and the party recovered its gravity.

"But what is going to be the end of this?" whispered Varick to Chalmers. "If he catches on he will have me out, and kill me. And there 's Mrs. Innis; oh, Lord! Reggie, you know everybody and all about everything in Washington; if you love me, get him back there."

Then Chalmers sent for his groom, and wrote some telegrams; and the following afternoon Cordillas came to Varick, sorely cast down, and announced that the minister had sent him imperative orders to return.

"I fear," he said, "those infamous Cubanos have caused complications which necessitate my presence at the capital."

Varick said that he was awfully sorry—but saw to it personally that he caught the evening train. As it moved off, the Spaniard stood on the step and wrung his hand.

"My friend, possessor of that great horse Emperor," he said, "I thank you for the ride of my whole life."

"Please don't mention it," said Varick.
"Don't speak of it!"

"But," he added to himself, "I am much afraid he will."

THE "TRANSFIGURED PAIR"



V

THE "TRANSFIGURED PAIR"

"I HAD always supposed," said Mrs. Innis, "that Eleanor Colfax would be married in her habit, with the groom and the ushers in pink, and her brother Willie blowing all he could of the wedding-march on a coach-horn. With her figure, she ought to have done it."

"It certainly was a great opportunity thrown away," said Varick. "A 'hunting wedding' would have got at least two columns in the newspapers, with portraits of the principals, probably life-size, surrounded by free-hand drawings of us all in riding-things. It would have been something to show our grandchildren. I suggested it to Brooky, but he began to talk about his

changed life, his aims, and his duties, and finally pitched into me for wasting my genius upon the stable. He 's the worst case I 've known since my own."

"Well, you got over yours," said Mrs. Innis, flicking a grain of rice from his sleeve.

They were interrupted by the footman coming back after Braybrooke's hand-bag. He had dropped it on the veranda while protecting his bride from Willie Colfax's bombardment of rice and old shoes; for this new brother-in-law had played the evil small boy. The man hurried after the carriage with the bag, and the excitement died away.

It had been the most "matrimonial" wedding, as Varick put it, ever seen in Oakdale, which in the circumstances was hardly to have been expected. The bride wore her mother's wedding-dress and her grandmother's veil. The bridesmaids were four school-girl cousins, imported for the occasion, and hurried back to their books with scarcely more than a glimpse of the hunting-men, who had said, "How do you

do?" very pleasantly, and then talked to each other about their horses. Similarly, Braybrooke had impressed four juvenile male relatives, who appeared in their first frock-coats; so that Willie Colfax, whom he could n't help asking to be best man, was the one familiar figure in the wedding-party. "You and I," this youth remarked to the bishop, after the ceremony, "were about the only thoroughbreds in the outfit."

"You flatter me, William," said the bishop, with a twinkle in his eye. "I suppose I may expect another invitation for a tandem ride."

Now, the exact propriety with which this wedding had been conducted was the bishop's personal triumph, although, being a discreet man as well as a good, he did not boast about it. After his first visit to Oakdale, the year before, he had done a little earnest missionary work. A long-neglected needlework gild came to life again, the parish debt was paid, and the church got a new organ. The betrothal of Miss Colfax and Braybrooke had offered

a chance for cultivating in the parish of St. Thomas Equinus a more serious public spirit. His experienced mind had taken due advantage of it, and the seed which he sowed brought forth beyond his expectations. To be sure, as he admitted to himself, it had fallen upon a virgin soil.

"Jimmy," said Miss Colfax, not long after they were engaged, "we owe a lot to the poor people in the village. I've made up my mind to carry out the bishop's idea for a boys' club." In consequence, every Thursday evening until they went back to town Braybrooke drove her to the gild-house, and played "Geisha" tunes on the melodeon; and the boys adored her so fervently that they forebore to guy him. The gibes of Varick and Willie Colfax he met with pity for their unregenerate state. He was filled with the idea of improving himself into a great and good man, worthy in a measure of Her, while it seemed to her that the bishop had opened her eyes to a beautiful and entirely new world of womanliness. They began to read the first volume of Gibbon

together, and became known to the Oakdale Hunt as the "Transfigured Pair."

But her great plan was the wedding-trip. They were to go around the world, skimming the cream of culture in the temples and galleries of Europe, and reading the history of foreign peoples on the spot; and were to come back highly educated, and devoted to a new order of things, in which a fortnight's hunting at Oakdale was to be merely an autumnal incident. And so it was that, radiant with love and a satisfying confidence in the future, they had boarded the day express, with their trunks neatly placarded by Varick and Willie Colfax:

Property of Circumterrestrial Pilgrims of Moral and Educational Research. Handle Gently.

"Well," she said, as the train began to move, "it's begun." She settled herself with a sigh of content, and gazed out of the window. "It will be a whole year before we see the river again. Jimmy, I am so happy!" Braybrooke patted her hand.

"Look," she said; "there's the steeple-

chase course, and the brushed hurdle where Mrs. Hawkins refused."

He put his face to the window beside hers. In a moment the glimpse of the hurdle was gone, but the memories of that race-day almost a year before lingered in their minds. They glanced at each other; it was not necessary to speak. Presently the train swept around a bold curve, and Braybrooke crossed to the other side of the state-room and drew the curtains. He motioned toward the window across the narrow passage. "There 's the pasture lot, and the horses," he said.

Turned out that very morning was her mare Queenston, and her second horse, the chestnut gelding with the white stockings, and the cobs she drove to her buckboard, and his hunters, Mrs. Hawkins and the rest, cropping the fresh grass which the recent rains had brought. As the train passed they lifted their heads and trotted in a troop toward the fence.

"Are n't they dears?" she whispered.

"And look," he said; "do you see the field beyond Morgan's woods? That 's

where we killed last November, and I got the brush I gave you."

"It 's in my trunk," she said.

Morgan's woods faded out in the distance, and the country became new and strange. "Good-by, Oakdale," she murmured. Braybrooke smiled weakly, and tried to say something, but only gulped.

They had hit upon the highly original idea of stopping off for a few days at a place so near Oakdale that it would never occur to any one to suspect their whereabouts. Therefore, when they were greeted by a beaming hackman as Mr. and Mrs. Braybrooke, and handed into an aged barouche trimmed with white streamers, they were amazed and indignant. Of course they learned afterward that Willie Colfax had bribed the Oakdale station-agent to betray the place to which he had checked their luggage; but for the time being they could only wonder, and make the best of the embarrassing interest which every one about the hotel took in them.

There was a lake at this place, and a moon to shine upon it by night; and they

passed three agreeable days discovering that never before could two young persons have been so fortunately married. On the fourth day Eleanor wrote to her aunt, Mrs. Alden Adams: "Both of us well and perfectly happy. We leave this afternoon." They posted this at the station, and set out upon their travels.

"I am so glad," she remarked, "that we have really started. We 've got so much to do, and so much to see, and so far to go. It is going to be a wonderful trip. And it will be so nice to settle down at once to the kind of life we are always going to lead together—finding out all the greatest ideas that people have had, and trying to think them and live them ourselves."

She expressed these admirable sentiments with a certain note of defiance in her tone, as if she expected to be contradicted. Braybrooke glanced at her inquiringly.

"We shall have about five days of this sleeping-car before we get to Vancouver," he observed. "It's terribly stuffy." He

fanned himself impatiently with a newspaper.

"And then," she went on, "we shall have three days before the ship sails, sha'n't we? We want to see Spokane and Seattle, of course, and run over to Victoria; and then—Japan and China! Is n't it splendid?"

"Yes, splendid," he said; "by the way, we must try to be decent to my uncle when we get to China. It will be a bore, of course. He's got his yacht there, and he's running some drag-hounds around Shanghai. He'll want us to go about with him a lot. Of course we'll be seeing temples, and buying bronzes and things; but I do think he'll feel hurt if we don't show him some attention. We might go out with the hounds just once, don't you think?"

"I don't see any harm in that," she assented.

"I forgot to tell you," he went on, "that I got a letter from him before we left Oakdale. Kingston, the horse he sent out to breed to native mares, is dead."

"What a pity!" said the girl. "Poor old Kingston! He was Queenston's sire." She sighed. "Jimmy, was Kingston by Canadian Prince or Imported Autocrat? Willie and I had a bet about it, and I've always meant to look it up."

Braybrooke thought a moment.

"I forget," he said. He made a movement toward his hand-bag, checked himself, and colored.

"What's the matter?" she demanded.

"Nothing, dear, nothing; I was only trying to remember."

"Don't bother," she said; "of course it's of no importance. Suppose we read some Gibbon; we are awfully behind."

He fished the third volume out of his bag, found the place, and began to read aloud about Alaric and the sack of Rome.

Braybrooke read in a solemn, unpunctuated voice, and dealt with proper names and difficult words according to his first impressions. The results were sometimes curious, but she never corrected him. When he reached the account of the pillage of the splendid palaces she interrupted

him: "We shall see some of those ruins when we get to Rome, sha'n't we? It's very interesting; but the car shakes so, I am afraid you ought to stop; you'll ruin your eyes."

He shut the book.

"I wonder," he observed, "if anybody ever read Gibbon on his wedding-trip before?"

She laughed.

"I don't care. It's very improving; and, really, we must keep up, and do all the things we are going to do."

"Who said anything about not doing them?" he demanded.

"Why, no one, of course," she answered, and was silent. "Jimmy," she asked, after a long pause, "when do we get to Greece?"

"February or March, I think."

"Well, it has just occurred to me that Mr. Fairfield, the architect, is going to send us a book all about the Parthenon. He says it's the most wonderful building in the world, although it's mostly tumbled down."

"Yes; I've heard him speak about it," said Braybrooke. "When he was up at Oakdale, two years ago, he and Captain Forbes got talking about the horses on the frieze. Forbes says they must have been the greatest weight-carriers for their inches that the world has ever seen. Why, they only stood at most fourteen-one, and those fellows in the heavy cavalry, with their gear, averaged one hundred and ninety, anyway."

"They must have been a strain of Arab," she remarked. "It's always interested me to think how they bred up our big thoroughbred from such little stock. And it was n't very long ago, either. When was the Godolphin Arab brought to England?"

"I don't believe I remember," he answered; "but—" He started toward the hand-bag again, and stopped shamefacedly.

"Jimmy," she asked sharply, "what's in that bag? Get it!"

He opened the satchel, and handed her a volume. It was a part of the Stud-book. She looked at him seriously.

"I did n't know, you see," he said apologetically; "I thought we *might* need it, so I put it in along with the Gibbon. It makes the bag pretty heavy."

She turned her face to the window, and for a long time they sat in silence.

"Railway traveling is fearfully dull," he said at length. "Can't keep clean; can't exercise. I 'm glad it 's only five days to the coast."

She made no comment.

"Do you feel all right, dear?" he asked anxiously. "You 're not ill?"

"I 'm very well," she answered, without looking at him. There was another long pause.

"How would some lunch go?" he suggested timidly. "I 'm nearly starved."

She shook her head.

"I 'm not hungry a bit," she said gently; "but you get something."

He opened the basket, and tried some olives and a cold woodcock; but his appetite had vanished and he shut the hamper again. She seemed not to want to talk, and he fell to watching her as she gazed

out of the car window. He had never seen her so quiet and subdued before. There was a sad, absorbed look in her face. It made her very beautiful, but it troubled him.

Was it usual for brides to act in this way on their wedding-trip? he asked himself. Did n't she love him, after all? Was she beginning to feel that she had made a mistake? He wanted to speak to her, and have the matter explained, but he was afraid; so he sat, miserable and full of fears, watching now her, now the passing landscape, until the fields and woods began to weave themselves into a sort of day-dream, and he almost forgot that he was on his wedding-trip, bound for the ends of the earth.

The autumn afternoon wore away, and still they rode on in silence. Once she said: "Is n't it beautiful? There 's no State so beautiful as New York. It will be a year before we see it again."

Toward dusk they entered a valley that suggested the Oakdale country. It was a region of good rail fences, with here and

there a line of boards, and scarcely a strand of wire. There were broad bottom-lands, and beyond these a sky-line of gently rolling heights. From time to time a patch of blue on the flats showed where the river curved. The soft stretches of stubble-field, the reds and yellows of the woods on the distant hills, the long, dim shadows of the elms in the pasture lots, the sunshine fading into twilight—it was all like the end of an October hunting-day. He could almost hear the far-away outcry of the hounds; he almost expected to see them break from the next piece of woods. The clicking of the wheels began to run into the rhythm of a galloping horse and he imagined himself rating along on Mrs. Hawkins. He scanned the country as the next covert came into view, and was wondering what direction the fox would probably take, when he heard Her sigh. He glanced up apprehensively, and watched her. Then he almost laughed outright. She too was studying the fences, following them with her eyes till they passed out of view. A wave of great

gladness swept over him. He knew now where her thoughts were. A great many plans came into his brain, and suddenly he reached a mighty determination. He watched her intently, chuckling to himself over the idea which had taken possession of him. All at once he heard her murmur, unaware that he could hear:

"That would be my place—the top rail would break."

"I suppose she 's galloping her mare," he thought, and chuckled again. "Yes, dear," he said softly; "only Queenston would n't hit it."

She started, and colored guiltily. "You 've been listening!" she exclaimed, and the tears stood in her eyes. "I don't love you as I ought," she said. "I thought I had put all those things away. But I 've been thinking about Queenston and Oakdale, and the run they 'll have to-morrow. I 've got to tell you." She began to cry, and her head sank upon his shoulder.

"There, there!" he said gently. "I 've got something to tell you, too. We're going back to Oakdale, and we are going to-night."

The weeping stopped. "Oh, Jimmy!" she gasped. "But we can't!"

"There are all kinds of people in the world," he went on, "and I guess we had better be our own kind. I fell in love with you when you were jumping the red gate out of the Four Oaks pasture, and it was a steeplechase that helped me out with you. Now, there 'll be plenty of charity, and all that, at Oakdale, and we can read books and things evenings. But this globe-trotting is n't our distance. Besides, I am afraid I shall never make a good rater at culture; and, after all, it really is something to know a good horse. Nell, Oakdale is the place for us."

"But all we 've planned out!" she sobbed.

"Let 's own up we 've drawn blank," he said. "Now, see here. The horses were only turned out four days ago, and they 'll be fit to go to-morrow. A wire to-night will bring 'em up, and we will be there in time to ride. What do you say about it?"

She smiled through her tears.

"I was thinking of that, too," she said.

"It's the Deep Gully woods, and they will be sure to find."

Then Braybrooke sent for the conductor, and wrote a telegram three pages long. The conductor told him that the next stop was a very good place to dine, and that they could catch the up-train to Oakdale there at nine-forty.

"Then," said Braybrooke, "we get out of this in exactly half an hour."

His wife's maid was of the discreet order and raised no question, even with her eyes, when he asked her to get the hand-luggage ready as quickly as she could. Braybrooke was grateful for this. It is not pleasant to have even your wife's maid laugh in her sleeve when you start around the world and change your mind before you get three hundred miles. His spirits rose, and he was quite as perfectly happy as the bridegrooms of story-books when he led her down the car as the train drew into the station. He heard some very nice-looking people observe that the town they had come to was a funny place

for a honeymoon, but he did not even blush. On the platform his face became grave. He turned to her.

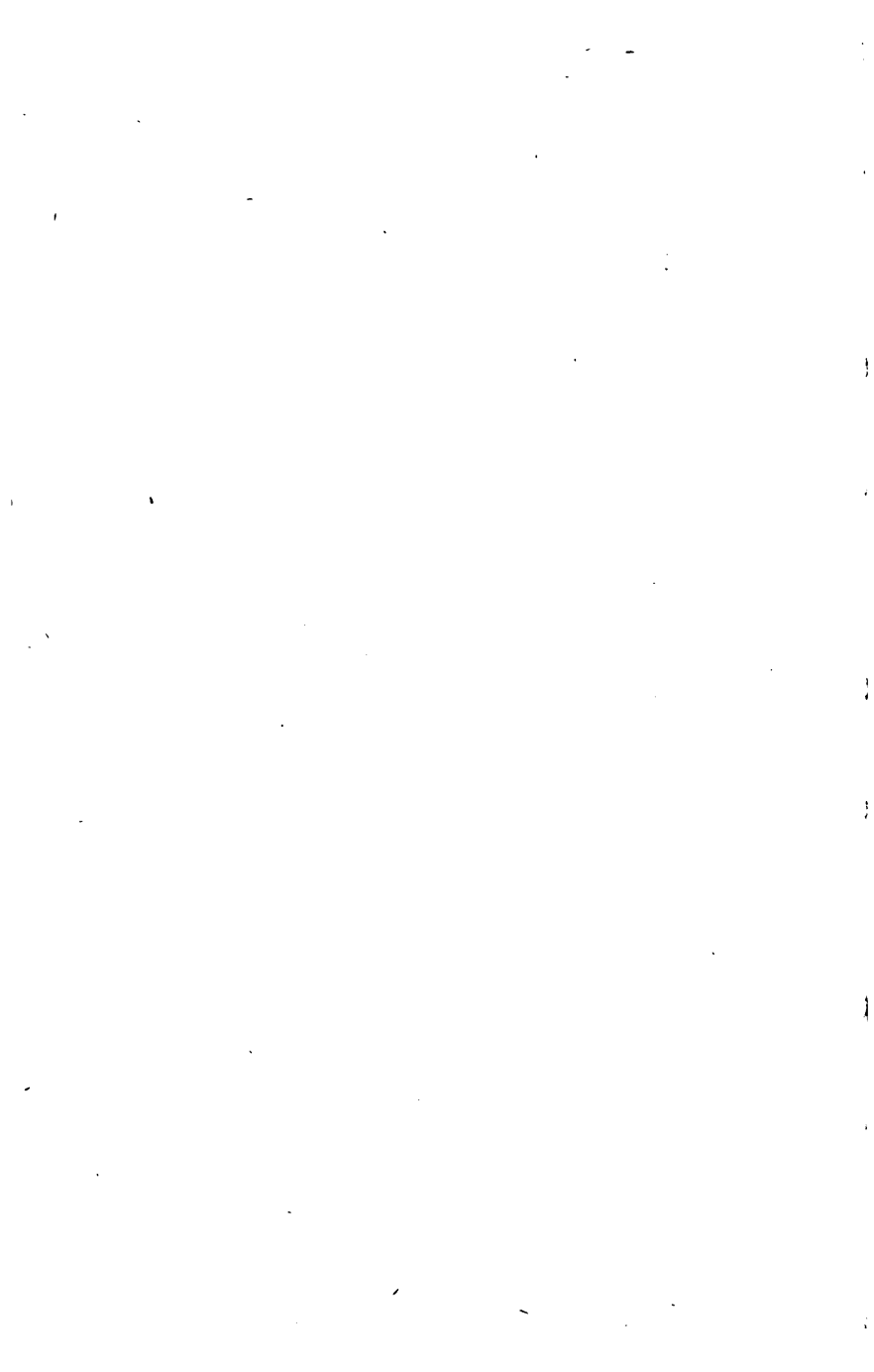
"It 's just occurred to me," he said; "they will guy us the worst way at the meet to-morrow. Do you want to change your mind?"

She pressed his hand, and with a happy look shook her head.

"But of course you will let me follow you?" she asked. "You won't be always telling me to keep back?"

He paused irresolutely on the step. He had not thought of that, and it meant a great deal—no more five-foot "larking," no more chancing it over wire. It meant a lifetime of sober, decorous jumping. Then he looked at her.

"What I jump, you shall too," he said; and stepped down to offer her his hand.



THE POPULARITY OF TOMPKINS



VI

THE POPULARITY OF TOMPKINS

"MY dearest Mother," wrote Mr. Frederick Tompkins, when he had been at Oakdale a week: "The Varicks are awfully kind. They have a very good house, which Mrs. Innis—who is Mrs. Varick's sister, you know—seems to have a good deal to say about. I suppose this accounts for my being made welcome, although I am only her guest, and did not know any one else in the family. This is the greatest place I ever struck. I wish the governor would get a house here. I could run it, and get some of the men in our class to come up and stop with me, now that we are through college. You could

come up for the steeplechases, and give a hunt ball. How does the idea hit you?

"Our Western hospitality is n't a marker on what they do for one here. I have been dined and lunched and furnished with horses in a way that is really wonderful, considering that I am a stranger. There is nothing much in the way of girls, but there is the smoothest lot of men I ever met. Mrs. Innis introduced me to the best of them, and I suppose they have showed me attention on her account. Monday morning, after I got here, there was a hunt,—not shooting, you know,—and Mr. Varick let me ride a horse called Sir Roger. He says that as perfect a type of hunter as this one is dirt-cheap at fifteen hundred, and I can well believe it. I just let him go, and was right in it from the start. Of course I had never hunted before—only after jack-rabbits at home, where there is no jumping; but Mrs. Innis told me it was n't necessary to tell any one this, and that I would soon get the trick. She said just to let the horse alone and he 'd do the rest, and he did. It was the

greatest sensation I ever had in my whole life. Varick said that I had ridden uncommonly well, and that the horse was just suited to me. Of course I have always ridden out home with a curb and a loose rein, so I did n't bother his head, and let him pick his own jumping. Mrs. Innis said this was the best way to do with a well-schooled horse, unless you were a crack and had really good hands. She says that most men get falls because they think they know how to 'lift' their horses and 'foot' them at their fences. It is wonderful how much she has picked up about all this sort of thing, because she does n't ride, and never talks horse the way some of the other women do. She also suggested that I should take whatever was said about hunting as a matter of course, which was clearly good advice. Mrs. Innis is a very charming woman. Monday she introduced me to a man named Galloway, and he asked me to come over to lunch on Tuesday and look at his string. He also offered me a mount for Wednesday. Varick told me I had better take it,

as Sir Roger was pretty tired and had cut his frog. He was foolish once, and jumped on a pile of stones.

"Wednesday, on Galloway's mare Vixen, I had an immense ride. She got away from me once and jumped three strands of barbed wire, and I beat the whole field. Everybody is talking about it, and I am getting the reputation of being a hard goer. Galloway said that the price of that horse ought to go up five hundred after such a performance, but he 's going to keep it at a thousand. If you hear of anybody in Washington who is looking for a regular clipper, tell him about Vixen; I should like to do Galloway a good turn.

"There is a fellow up here called Willie Colfax, whose cousin was in college with me. He has been very civil, and came over and got me Thursday morning, and took me for a ride 'cross country on a horse called Lorelei. They have a very good way here of sometimes bandaging a horse's legs to protect them from the thistles. Colfax had bandages on Lorelei.

He said she is very thin-skinned on account of her breeding. It is a humane custom, don't you think? Lorelei jumped like a bird. She is the greatest bargain I have seen yet, and I almost wish I was buying horses. Colfax will let her go for five hundred; at least, I inferred so from some remarks he let drop. If Sis wants a good hack that can jump, the governor ought to consider this mare. Colfax was very flattering, and said he had never seen Lorelei go so well, and that it needed a hard goer to do her justice. You ought to be proud of your son! To-day (Friday) I lunched at the club with Captain Forbes, and looked over his string afterward. He has three very likely horses that he is willing to let go, as he has more than he needs. He is going to mount me to-morrow. There are a number of men here who have more horses than they need, and are willing to sell. They have been very kind in offering me mounts. I suppose they are glad to have them exercised. By the way, several people have spoken about the governor's starting fox-

hunting out on the coast. He 'd look queer riding to hounds, but it is a very captivating idea. Sound him about it.

"I have wired your New York florist to send four dozen American Beauties to Mrs. Varick, and the same to Mrs. Innis. I mention this lest I should forget to speak about it, and you should think the bill wrong. This is a very long letter, and makes up for some short ones. Love to Father and Sis.

"Your aff. son,

"FREDERICK TOMPKINS."

When Mrs. Innis's friends asked her how it was that she had annexed this scion of the West, she replied that she was laying up treasure with the mammon of the Occident, and, moreover, that he was a very nice boy and admired *her*. She discovered him in Washington, where Senator Tompkins had established his family for the winter. Now, young Tompkins *was* a nice boy, and some day would be rich, and there were several mamas in Washington who considered Mrs. Innis's interest in him not less than shameful.

TOMPKINS sent his letter off to the post, and presented himself in the drawing-room to take tea with Mrs. Innis. He found Captain Forbes there.

"Hello!" said Forbes. "I was hacking over this way, and dropped in to see whether you were going to ride Rajah to-morrow. I understood you to say you would; but Varick said something about mounting you on a four-year-old of his."

"Well," said Tompkins, "I had n't heard anything about the four-year-old. Of course, as I 'm stopping here, I ought to ride Varick's horse for him if he wants me to; but I should like very much to have a go with the Rajah."

"All right," said Forbes; "I 'll see Varick. Where is he?"

"In the smoking-room, I think," said Mrs. Innis.

The captain found Varick in a very bad temper, making up his stable accounts.

"Look here," said he; "it 's low down of you, Varick, to keep this Tompkins chap all to yourself. He 's a mighty attractive little chap, and he has a good eye for a horse, and I want him to ride some good

ones, so I 've offered him the Rajah. He says you have n't spoken to him yet about mounting him on that skate four-year-old, and he wants to ride the Rajah, but he 's afraid of offending you."

"Oh, hang him!" exclaimed Varick; "let him ride anything you say. This desperate altruism on your part, however, is something new. Get out of here, Forbes; I 've been swindled on my hay."

Forbes went back, and told Tompkins it was all right about Rajah, and then rode away.

"Mrs. Innis," said Tompkins, after the captain had departed, "I 've been having a great time this week. There is the best crowd of men here I ever saw. That fellow Forbes is a brick. There are n't many men who would lend their hunters to a stranger the way he 's done."

"That 's so," said Mrs. Innis, with a smile; "but then, Frederick, you are a very nice young man." He had asked her to call him Frederick.

"Oh, pshaw!" said Tompkins, and colored. "They 're civil to me because

I am your friend, that 's all; they adore you."

"I wish I could believe that," said Mrs. Innis; "but I am sure it is n't so. I had Cordillas up here, and they were really horrid to him. But I don't suppose I ought to speak about that story, since you are going back to Washington."

Tompkins would have liked to hear that story, but he did n't say so; he held it unmasculine to be curious.

"By the way," asked Mrs. Innis, "have they said anything to you about starting a hunt out on the Pacific?"

"Why, yes," said Tompkins; "two or three of them have spoken about it. I think it would be a great thing, but I 'm afraid the governor would n't vote for it. You see, it might hurt him politically."

"Did you tell any one that?" she asked.

"No," said Tompkins; "I did n't say much about it. I thought I would sound the old gentleman first. It might carry, after all."

"That 's so," said Mrs. Innis. Tompkins stooped to pick up her handkerchief, and

she smiled in a quiet little way that seemed quite for her own edification. The man who thought that he knew Mrs. Innis best called that smile her "*glad-i-at-or* smile," because it expressed what the cat said after she had eaten the canary. When he observed that smile he was always uneasy till he was quite sure that the victim was some other man.

The next morning Tompkins hunted Rajah, and had the time of his life. The Rajah was an old steeplechaser with no particular mouth, and he rushed his jumps in a way that made mature persons who rode him wish to be at home in bed. Tompkins let him go, and the Hunt held back and gave him room. There is a saying that it takes seven croppers to make a horseman. Tompkins had n't had his first one yet, and so there was no use in giving him advice.

"Confound that fellow Tompkins!" said the M. F. H. "He's been riding over my hounds all the morning. Forbes, tell him, if he can't keep that blooming runaway of yours back, to go home."

Forbes cast an injured look at the M. F. H., and counseled Tompkins to moderation. But when the hounds found, they went off at a very fast clip, and then Tompkins was in his glory. He led the field for seven miles, turning neither to right nor to left, and he was with the pack at the kill before even the huntsman. When the M. F. H. presented him with the brush it seemed that all the joy of the world was in his cup. He resolved that the governor certainly should take a place at Oakdale, and that he would hunt forever after. It was only natural, therefore, that an unmanly lump should rise into his throat when he read the telegram which was waiting for him when he got back to the Varicks' that afternoon. It said:

Letter received. You come home on first train.

FATHER.

THAT night, after dinner, Varick went to the club, and found a group of men playing pool.

"Hello!" said Forbes. "While I think

of it, tell Tompkins—will you?—that I'm afraid the Rajah won't be fit to go on Monday. The fact is (of course you need n't say anything about it), his old tendon is as big as my wrist. The horse went marvelously. Really, though, that boy is a shocking pounder."

"I should say he was!" exclaimed Galloway. "Vixen threw a curb with him, and he rode so much out of Lorelei, just galloping her 'cross lots, that Willie has had to fire her again and turn her out."

"Really?" said Varick. "Well, he used up Sir Roger, too—jumped him on a pile of stones and cut his frog. But, I say, Forbes," he added, "Tompkins has gone; so it won't matter about the Rajah on Monday."

"Gone?" repeated Forbes. The other men regarded Varick incredulously.

"Yes; Washington on the eight-thirty."

"Well," said Forbes, "he's coming back, is n't he?"

"Not that I know of," said Varick.

"I guess he is, though," said Forbes. "The fact is, you see, I was told, rather in

confidence, that he came up here to buy a string of hunters for his father. I understand that the old gentleman is going to run a pack of drag-hounds somewhere out West."

Colfax, Galloway, and Varick looked curiously at Forbes, and then at one another.

"I got the same 'steer,'" blurted out Galloway; then Willie Colfax nodded, signifying that it had likewise been imparted to him.

"That 's very funny," said Varick; "for I heard something of the same sort myself. Forbes, do you mind saying whether Tompkins himself told you that?"

"No," said Forbes; "Tompkins did n't."

"Then who was it?" demanded Varick.

"I don't know that I ought to tell," he answered; "though I don't suppose there's any harm in it. You see, I was n't actually told that Tompkins was going to buy, but it was put to me in such a way that I got that impression. I was asked as a personal favor not to sell him anything that was n't the best—well—by Mrs. Innis."

Varick gave forth a long, low whistle, and in the silence that followed Galloway and Colfax moved thoughtfully toward different parts of the wall, and each pressed an electric button.

"I am afraid," said Varick, slowly, "that we have been 'up against it.' Ever since that Spanish chap rode old Thomas Dooley, and thought he was up on Emperor, my sister-in-law has been 'laying low' with Brother Rabbit. She won't believe that we lament the mistake."

When Forbes mentioned Mrs. Innis, the M. F. H., who had been practising billiard shots at the next table till his turn should come around, threw down his cue, and appeared to be choked by his emotions. A great light had struck him.

"This is almost too much!" he sighed. "Coming home this afternoon, for three miles Tompkins talked to me about the whole-souled generosity of the men of this Hunt—men who seemed to find delight in pursuing him with attentions and offers of horses. 'Why, Mr. Crawford,' said he, 'I never saw such a place! I believe I could

stay here a month, and be mounted three times a week!'"

Just then the sound of women's voices rose in the hall. A party had come in for supper.

"Hello!" said the M. F. H., listening; "Mrs. Innis is out there now. This is too good to keep; I've got to tell her." He went to the door. It was a family sort of club, and ladies often went into the billiard-room.

"Don't you want to come in here and exult?" he said. "I'm not equal to the whole thing myself; and besides, it's your party."

Mrs. Innis turned, and hesitated. "What's that?" she asked.

"Why, you have caused the heathen to rage," exclaimed the M. F. H., "and they are making themselves very amusing about some horses they did n't sell."

"*Exult?*" she replied. "*Horses they did n't sell?* What on earth are you talking about?"

The M. F. H. took a long breath, like a man who gets a bucket of cold water

thrown on him. Then he became matter-of-fact and mirthless. He knew Mrs. Innis pretty well.

"Oh, nothing much," he said; "just any old thing. By the way, next week I expect to have two chaps stopping with me, who are coming on to look about for hunters; and I shall be awfully busy just then, because Mrs. Crawford is going to have a lot of girls at the house. Can't you help me show 'em about a bit?"

Mrs. Innis looked at the M. F. H. as though she were wondering whether she could conscientiously comply.

"Why, yes," she answered; "I shall be glad to help you in any way I can."

"Well, they won't be much trouble," the M. F. H. added. "Men who are buying horses always seem to be popular up here. If you 've never noticed it, I 'll make you a present of the idea."

"You are very good," replied Mrs. Innis. "It is certainly a very ingenious idea. But you are always having ingenious ideas; you have an ingenious mind."

The M. F. H. bowed.

"Yes. The idea 's ingenious enough; only there 's the very deuce to pay if they don't buy, after all. Now take the case of your friend Tompkins. It 's rather serious. There are three or four chaps in here who are talking of having him arrested for fraud—"

"Why, Mr. Crawford!" exclaimed Mrs. Innis, incredulously; "you don't tell me that any one thought Mr. Tompkins came here to buy horses? He came here to see me. Of course, before he arrived, I thought it possible that he might want to pick up a hunter or so, and I asked the men I knew not to sell him anything that was n't the best. But, dear me! the day he arrived he told me that his father had forbidden his buying horses of any kind, and so I never bothered about the matter again; it quite went out of my head." Then she looked at the M. F. H. with the faintest gleam in her eyes. "Please take this thing," she added.

He took her wrap and put it on a chair. "Why, of course," he said; "nothing could be more natural."

They could hear all this from the billiard-room.

"Crawford," called Varick, "are you going to play pool, or do you wish me to telephone for Mrs. Crawford?"

"Coming at once," replied the M. F. H.

"Varick," growled Galloway, who was thinking of Vixen's curb, "let's drop Mr. Tompkins and his popularity. It's your shot—hurry up and play!"

CHALMERS'S GOLD PIECE



VII

CHALMERS'S GOLD PIECE

"**T**HERE goes a good chap," said the M. F. H., nodding toward Chalmers. The hunting Earl turned in the saddle, and looked. He was jogging alongside of the M. F. H., who was taking him into covert with the hounds. (This was only the proper courtesy to extend to so great a fox-hunter.) "He 's back this morning from the Rockies," the M. F. H. added; "I 'd like to have you know him."

"Beg pardon," observed the Earl, "but is n't he rather queerly turned out?"

The M. F. H., who was sounding his horn, laughed, and spoiled his note.

"Those *are* pretty awful riding-things. They belong to his groom."

"Not very well off—bankrupt or something?" suggested the Earl.

"Thunder, no!" exclaimed the M. F. H. "He 's a terrible millionaire. You see, he got back a day sooner than he expected, and they had n't brought his things down from town. He did n't have time to borrow any breeches, and he was n't going to miss a run, so he put on the cords belonging to his man's new livery, and an old jacket. They are all running him about it, for he 's usually rather smart. I dare say you 've seen his yacht, the *Independence Day*, at Cannes. He prowls all over the place after big game, and he 's one of the best men in America to hounds."

"Very interesting indeed," said the Earl. "I should like to meet him."

The M. F. H. looked back and tried to catch Chalmers's eye; but Chalmers was watching a young woman coming over a big panel of rails in a slashing way one does n't often see. It impressed him, and he rode over to Varick, who was dismounted tightening his girths, and asked him who the strange girl was.

"Did n't notice her," said Varick; "but there are several new ones here just now. There 's a professional from some London riding-school, looking about for high jumpers. Colfax is trying to sell her Lorelei at a low price and no guaranty. Then there 's a Miss Crackenthorpe, a Philadelphia girl, stopping with the Gallo-ways; and—" He stopped abruptly, and listened. Somebody was calling in the distance. It was indistinct at first; but then the breeze swelled lazily and brought a faint "Gone away! Gone away!" from the whip on the farther side of the covert. A moment later the pack picked up the hot scent, and set up a terrific yeow-yeowing.

"Hullo, they are off!" Varick exclaimed, and, mounting hastily, he galloped after the troop of excited men and horses.

AN hour later—they had lost that fox, and were after a second one—Chalmers emerged from a big wood-lot, and looked about him for signs of the Hunt. There was no one in sight. It is not pleasant to

find one's self a minority of one on the question of inferring a fox's ultimate line from his circlings in the impracticable underbrush—unless, of course, one happens to be *right*, and has hounds, fox, and everything to himself, in which case he has an exclusive smoking-room story forever after. But Chalmers had neither quarry nor pack.

"Why, oh, why," he murmured plaintively, "do I never hit it right?" He strained his ears for the sound of the hounds; but there was only the rustle of the stray leaves that bobbed across the stubble on the wind. The region was unfamiliar and, in the desolate stillness of a November afternoon, unprepossessing.

"That wretched fox certainly has doubled back," he said to himself. "I'm out of it, and I'm afraid I'm lost, to boot." He felt hungry, and inspected a lone and crumpled sandwich; but he reflected that he would doubtless be hungrier later on, so he put it away. He was searching the dull horizon for the sun, from which to get his bearings, when he

was startled by the crash of breaking rails.

He glanced around, and saw a woman coming a most appalling cropper over the fence between him and the wood-lot. The horse scrambled to its feet, trailing its rider head down, and broke into a gallop. The skirt of her habit was hooked over one of the pommels. It all happened as swiftly and inevitably as things happen in a bad dream. It sickened him, but the instant the horse started he had started after it. There was no time to follow the runaway and pull him up, for at any moment the woman might swing under his hoofs, or be dashed against a stone.

It came to Chalmers that the thing to do was to "cross." This was an experience which he had several times unintentionally provoked at polo. After his first thorough collision he came to before the match was over, and a famous No. 2, who was looking on, bent over his stretcher. "Next time when you see there has got to be a smash," he said, "don't let the other fellow hit you

behind the saddle. It's just as well to let *him* have the spill." This means that a pony run down forward of the girths is not so likely to be thrown off his hind legs, and has a chance of collecting himself before he goes completely over. Chalmers remembered this. He had only fifty yards to ride, and he calculated his pace correctly. The bewildered horse which he was attempting to head off made no attempt to swerve, and they met fairly at right angles. Chalmers was conscious of a stunning shock and of being in a heap with two horses. He wondered where the woman was. As he got up he saw that she had been thrown clear and was lying motionless. A drop of blood was gathering from a scratch on her cheek. He noticed it hang an instant, and then trail down across her face. He was sure that she was dead. There was a numb feeling in his left shoulder, and mechanically he changed the bridle to his right hand. For a moment he stood dazed and silent. The woman's horse picked itself up and went off, and Chal-

mers still stood, wondering exactly what had happened. Then the woman sat up, and his senses came to him.

"Are you much hurt?" he gasped. His knees felt weak, and he leaned against his horse.

"No," said the girl; "I think I 'm only shaken up."

Chalmers watched her anxiously. It was the girl he had noticed taking the fence before the run began. "Yes; it 's the riding-mistress," he said to himself. It had just occurred to him that he had once met the Philadelphia girl whom Varick had mentioned, and that she was quite a different person. Besides, this girl spoke with a markedly English intonation. She began to turn her head first one way and then the other, as if she were making sure it was really there.

"I 'm afraid you 've hurt your neck," he said. "Have you any pain—down your back?"

"No," she answered weakly; "but I can't get all those hoofs out of my eyes. It seems as if they were coming down

smash! They 're worse than I ever had before."

Chalmers had experienced the hoof phenomenon himself, and he knew that it made the first moments after a bad cropper extremely bewildering.

"Lie down a minute," he suggested.

She collapsed miserably into a heap, and began to cry softly. Chalmers turned his head away, and wondered what he ought to do. For a man of his age he had been confronted with some exceptionally trying situations, but with nothing upon this order. Besides, this was inwardly distressing. It would have been easier if she had sniffled and "taken on" hysterically; but she wept in the subdued manner of utter wretchedness. It was very pathetic.

"You poor little thing!" Chalmers murmured. That she was not little, but rather tall, with a classic type of face and a wonderful skin, back into which the pink was beginning to find its way, did not abate the strain upon his feelings. He let his eyes rest on her for a moment.

"It 's inhuman to make a woman like that ride for her living," he muttered. "It 's devilish!" His ideas about women in the hunting-field underwent a rapid revision, as is apt to be the case with men who have just seen their first bad side-saddle spill. "And it 's only a question of time before she 'll be killed. By Jove, she simply must n't!" Now Chalmers meant this to be positive and final, for at that moment an idea struck him, which he hastily elaborated.

It was a simple solution of the matter. Chalmers had a sister whose fad was her hackney farm and her harness-horses. She drove four, and tandem, and all other possible ways; but she thought poorly of riding. She needed a confidential assistant (she had told Chalmers that), but a difficulty had confronted her in the prevailing sex of horse experts. This fixed it. He would wire Elizabeth; Elizabeth would wire Miss What's-her-name (he would find that out when he was properly presented) to New York, and the message would be repeated to Oakdale, as if Eliza-

both did n't know she was there. Then, by an odd coincidence, Miss Chalmers would turn out to be his sister, and the girl's risks of sudden death thenceforth would be limited to smashed vehicles and that class of accidents from which she would have almost the same chance of escape as a man. Presently the girl stopped crying, and Chalmers left off the works of his imagination with a smile. It was diverting to arrange matters for a person whom one did n't know. She lifted her head.

"Will you give me your flask?" she asked. "I 'm still a bit faint."

All Chalmers's things were on their way from town, and he had n't a flask with him.

"I 'm very sorry," he began awkwardly.

She sat up, and looked him over from head to toe with a swift glance.

"I beg your pardon," she interrupted. "I did n't think. I shall be quite well directly." She rose to her feet, leaving Chalmers somewhat mystified.

"Does your head trouble you?" he asked.

"No," she answered; "I really feel much better. But will you kindly explain to me how you came to be here? I thought I was jumping into an empty meadow."

Chalmers briefly explained that he had lost the hounds, and happened to be standing at one side when she fell, and afterward stopped the horse. The girl thought a moment.

"But your horse was down on his knees?" she said inquiringly. "I remember that."

"Well," answered Chalmers, "there was a bit of a collision."

"I think I understand," she answered. "That was a very brave thing to do!" Her eyes turned from his face, and Chalmers was somehow impressed for a moment that he was clad in ill-fitting cord breeches. Then she repeated impulsively, "A *very* brave thing to do!" He felt the red coming into his face.

"Nonsense!" he exclaimed. "The question is, How are we going to get home?" He looked after the runaway

horse. It was already in the field beyond. They watched it take the fence and disappear over the brow of a hill.

"Well, he's gone," said Chalmers. He glanced at his own horse with the man's saddle, and then at the girl. Their eyes met, and he fancied by the corners of her mouth that she understood the situation.

"When I was a child," she said gravely, "I used to ride straddle always. I think we can manage it if you will shorten the stirrups."

As he stretched out his left hand the ache in his shoulder became a sharp twinge, and the hand dropped.

"What's wrong?" she asked anxiously. "Is your arm broken?"

"No," said Chalmers; "if it's anything, I guess it's only the collar-bone. It didn't hurt, and I hardly realized it was cracked. No consequence, anyhow."

"It is of a great deal of consequence," she answered. "I am very, very sorry! Let me make a sling." She unbuckled the curb-rein, and triced the arm up with the skill of experience as well as the

woman's instinct for doing such things rightly.

"Grateful and comforting," he said to himself; "should be on every breakfast-table." Then he blushed at his own joke, and helped her up. Thus they set off in search of the turnpike, Chalmers leading the horse, and the lady riding astride. They got over a low fence, and through a gate across another field, and then they went into a piece of woods. From the other side of the woods a farm-house was visible, and presently, by winding through lanes and farm-yards, and by opening innumerable gates, they came out upon the highway.

"Well, this has been quite an adventure," said Chalmers. "I feel as if I were an 'Idyl of the King.' Those chaps used to go grailing and things with solitary maidens, did n't they?"

"Where did you hear about the 'Idyls of the King'?" she demanded.

"Hear about them?" he said, somewhat taken aback. "Why, I guess I must have read them."

"It is true, then," she said, half to herself, and as if she were making a note of it. "Every one reads books in America. I like that about America very much. I'm in favor of popular education. You see, I'm a great radical, and all that sort of thing."

"That 's good," said Chalmers. It struck him that she was the right sort to get on with the people on Elizabeth's farm.

"Have you been long in America?" he asked.

"About a month," she replied.

"What do you think of it?" He felt uncomfortable at sinking to this, but he wished to know what she did think.

"It 's very big," she said, "and very different—oh, quite different! The people are very odd, and the customs are strange. Have you ever been in New York?"

He said, "Yes," and chuckled.

"Every one travels in America, I've been told. In England they usually stop about the place where they were born. They rarely travel far, unless they go out to the colonies, you know."

"But you have been in London?" he asked, with a straight face.

She smiled. "Of course; I am very much in London," she replied. Then she asked, "Do you live here all the year?"

"So she's going to quiz *me*," he thought. "Well, turn about is fair play. No," he answered aloud; "I am pretty much all the time in New York and other places." As he usually spent the winter poking his yacht into out-of-the-way parts of the earth, he thought that this was specific enough.

"Really?" said she. "And I suppose that most of the gentlemen who hunt here live in town—I mean in New York. Mr. Varick has a town house there, I believe."

Chalmers said that he had. He wondered, though, why she seemed to associate him with Varick. He wondered if she took him for Varick's brother-in-law, Freddy Blake, who was stopping with Varick. He had been taken for him before.

The conversation languished, and for a long time they proceeded at the slow,

measured pace of the walking horse. It began to grow dark. Presently they came to a farm-house which he recognized. He knew that it was only three miles from the kennels, so he felt encouraged. As they were passing the orchard a few old thaws dangled in the bare boughs which overhung the road. In the dusk they were scarcely discernible.

"Are those black spots apples?" she asked suddenly. "I've had no tea at all, and I'm famished."

"You poor child!" he thought. "I'm afraid they're frozen," he said. He hesitated. "I have a sandwich in my pocket, only it's a good deal mussed."

The girl seemed embarrassed.

"No, really!" she exclaimed; "but I can't think of taking it. It's your last one, you know."

"But you must," he insisted. "It's lucky I happen to have it. At the last check your friend Mr. Varick divided his lunch with me." He handed her the small silver box. "He gave me the box, too, years ago. I've known him since he was a boy."

"Oh, indeed!" she said. "How very nice! Really, you are very good!" She examined the contents of the box rather gingerly, but proceeded to eat them.

"This is very good bacon," she remarked as she munched; "and they usually have such nasty bacon in America."

Chalmers laughed. "I shall have to warn Elizabeth to make an effort in the matter of bacon," he thought.

They trudged along for a while, till suddenly the road curved and showed them the lights of the club-house glimmering half a mile ahead, and the village beyond.

"Where shall I take you?" he asked.

"I think," she replied, "that I will go to the club. My uncle will probably be there."

"Uncle!" Chalmers exclaimed inwardly. "Good gracious! Is she in tow of some horse-dealing relative?" It struck him that his arrangement might meet with some new difficulties. "Well," he thought, "I guess we can fix uncle, too. I have a farm myself."

The big lanterns on the gate-posts shed

a cheerful light as they turned into the club driveway.

"It can't be much past six," he said. He noticed that she was fumbling for the invisible watch-pocket in her habit. "Just twenty minutes past," he added, holding his watch to the light. "We've made a very good pace—seven miles in two hours."

"I hope your arm has n't pained you much," she said.

"No; it has n't," he replied. They came under the porte-cochère, and stopped.

"I thank you very much for all that you have done," she said. "I shall tell my uncle and Mr. Varick about it." She slipped off with the support of his good arm, and extended her hand. The next moment Chalmers felt a coin in his palm.

"Oh, I say! I beg pardon!" he gasped. She paused on the steps, and faced him. He stood there speechless, with his arm outstretched toward her.

"Please take it," she said. "I know it's different in America, but you must. Of course one can't pay another for saving

her life; I can only thank you for that: but you have been to a great deal of trouble, too. English gold is good everywhere, is n't it? It's all I have with me. But my uncle will be very grateful to you. You must come and see him to-morrow. Please have your collar-bone carefully set. Good night."

She turned and went into the club. The situation burst on Chalmers. He slipped the gold piece into his pocket, and started for the stables. He stopped before he reached them, though. He was sitting, doubled over, on a bench by the roadway (it hurt his collar-bone less if he laughed doubled over) when a voice came out of the darkness:

"What's the matter there?" It was the M. F. H., on his way back from the kennels.

"Nothing," replied Chalmers, weakly—"nothing that I can tell you."

"Oh, is that you, Chalmers?" said the M. F. H. "I've been looking all over for you. Hurry up and make yourself presentable. You're dining with me at eight."

"I can't," Chalmers answered. "I've broken my collar-bone, and I hate to feed in company with one hand."

"It 's too bad about your bone, but you 've got to come. Your food shall be served to you all cut up, or you can have six courses of soup. But I don't see what 's so mighty funny about a bu'sted collar-bone."

"No," said Chalmers; "and you won't. Telephone right off for the doctor—will you?—or I shall be late." He rose and went on toward the stables. Suddenly the thing struck him in a new light.

"A sovereign," he mused, "must be quite a lot of money for a riding-mistress to give as a tip. I never thought about that. I wonder who her people were?"

THE M. F. H. met Chalmers as he came into the drawing-room.

"Hullo," said he; "all comfy? I want you to know the Earl of Reddesdale. He 's been here only a week, but he 's disbanded the Fence-Breakers, and he 's brought his niece with him, besides. Those

are two praiseworthy acts. Because you have foolishly got spilled somewhere, you are going to take her in to dinner. Miss Hamilton," he added, "may I present Mr. Chalmers?"

Miss Hamilton turned, and said she would be much pleased. Then she glanced at Chalmers, and her eyes dropped.

"I think," she said, "that I have had that pleasure—this afternoon. Mr. Chalmers brought me home." She touched the Earl's arm. "Uncle," she began, "this is—"

"This is very extraordinary!" ejaculated the Earl. "I thought a groom brought you back, my dear—one of Mr. Varick's men—"

"Oh, uncle!" the girl exclaimed.

When it was quiet enough for Chalmers to be heard, he announced that he had something to say. It seemed to him that the chaffing was a little trying for the girl, and he did a very noble thing. With certain reservations, he disclosed his hypothesis of the riding-school mistress, and

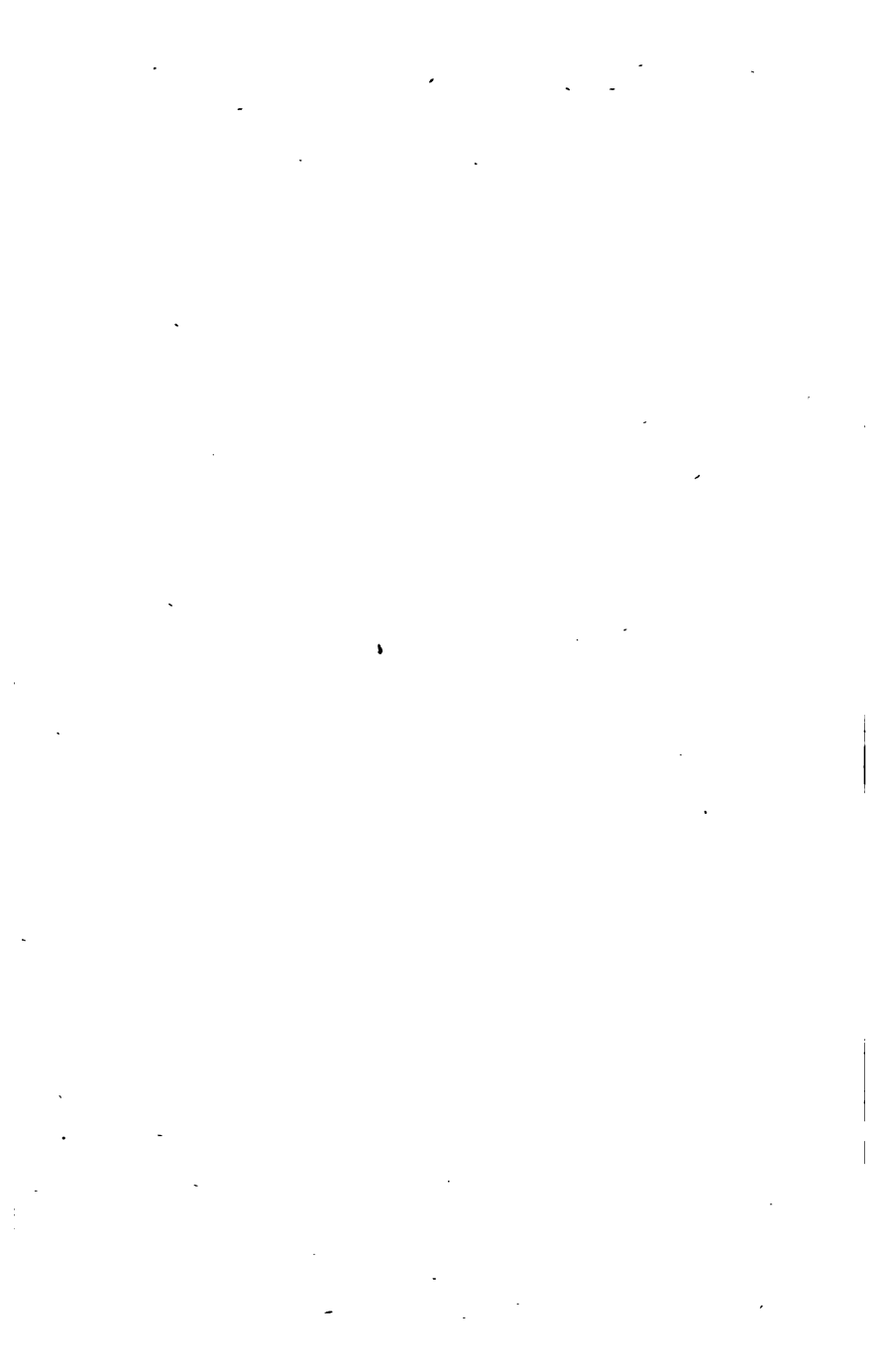
drew the fire upon himself. He blushed a deeper red than Miss Hamilton, but it was not so becoming, for his pink coat killed the effect.

"Well, you see," he added ingenuously, "I got back only this morning, and I never saw a woman ride like that who was n't a professional." Then dinner was announced.

"It was very generous of you to confess all that," she said, when they were seated.

"No," answered Chalmers; "it was only fair. My conscience would have troubled me if I had n't. But as I have no mama to consult about receiving presents from young ladies, I think I shall keep that sovereign."

**THE BISHOP'S MISSIONARY
MEETING**



VIII

THE BISHOP'S MISSIONARY MEETING

MRS. GALLOWAY checked the horse to a walk, and peered into the darkness.

"I think this is our turn," she said, "and we are only half a mile from home."

"I must say, madam," observed the bishop, "that my spirit goes forth in thanksgiving. We have really had a most adventurous expedition."

For two hours the bishop had been ironing the loins of Mrs. Galloway's phaëton-horse with a hot flat-iron, a fatiguing occupation to which he was unused. It was nearly ten o'clock, and he had had no dinner. He was weary, and his soul craved the flesh-pots.

The bishop had driven forth, in Mrs. Galloway's care, to inspect the condition of the parish poor with a view to organizing a home-missionary movement. His rector at Oakdale seemed inadequate to the task; so the bishop, according to his custom, had decided to examine the field for himself. At the cottage of Mrs. O'Rourke, eight miles from the Galloways', the horse, which had been left unblanketed, developed mysterious and alarming symptoms. His hind legs appeared to be paralyzed. The bishop led him under a shed, and the eldest of Mrs. O'Rourke's nine, who was twelve years old, diagnosed his trouble as a chill in the kidneys.

"Youse git a flat-iron from ma, and iron him with brown paper where he 's scrunchin' down. Linyimunt would be good, but I guess the flat 'll fix him if youse keep at it. I 'd do it meself, only I ain't that big."

Cuthbert O'Rourke ("These O'Rourkes is all of thim Or'ngemin, and there 's no Patricks," said the widow) superintended, and carried out the hot irons. The bishop

ironed, and Mrs. Galloway lamented and apologized. A smaller O'Rourke was sent to the village with a message to be telephoned to Mr. Galloway, instructing him not to wait dinner. Mrs. Galloway had invited a large company, which was to discuss the bishop's scheme and to subscribe money for carrying it out, so she naturally was exasperated. It was a quarter before six when the flat-iron treatment began; and at about eight o'clock Cuthbert assured the bishop, who was laboring by the light of a tin lantern, that the beast was well enough to travel. They started back at a slow trot, and what with the cold and the darkness, the pangs of hunger, and the apprehension of a return of the chill, the eight miles seemed excessively long. When they turned up the cross-road the bishop made an effort to confront the situation with Christian fortitude, and became almost cheerful.

"'After the toils and perils of war, grateful is the feast,'" he observed. "This is a pagan sentiment, but one rooted in the subsoil of our human natures."

Mrs. Galloway was wondering what sort

of feast would be forthcoming at that hour of the night, but she held her peace.

"It is truly noble of you, Mrs. Galloway," the bishop continued, "to assemble these people for a discussion of our project. I think I shall be able to state the matter strongly, and I doubt not that we shall receive generous support. I have been keenly interested in this parish, as presenting the problem of Christianity versus the well-to-do—the problem how to awaken a sense of higher responsibilities in a community of amiable barbarians. Do not misunderstand me: I use the word with the interpretation and authority of Mr. Matthew Arnold. And bear in mind, madam, I appreciate the usefulness of honest sport, and the physical manliness it engenders. But that is not all of life; and, unfortunately, I have observed in our sport-loving rich an indifference, a colorless moral attitude, toward the serious things of existence, which is almost more difficult to combat than actual vice. As I have intimated, this parish stands as a peculiarly suggestive type, and it is highly

gratifying to feel that the small efforts which I have put forth are slowly but surely bearing fruit—are slowly but surely producing an interest in spiritual things. A year ago, I dare say, such an occasion as this would hardly have been contemplated."

"It really *is* gratifying," said Mrs. Galloway; "but I am afraid you will have a very poor dinner. It must be nearly ten o'clock."

"Well," said the bishop, "'an egg and an olive,' partaken of in peace and with worthy discourse—that is a feast. Ah, here we are!" he added, with a sigh of relief. They drove under the porte-cochère, and stopped. A peal of uproarious laughter and a sound of stamping feet burst from the house.

"They must be still in the dining-room," said Mrs. Galloway. "Hold the horse, please, and I'll ring the stable bell. You could n't find it in the dark."

Just then a loud voice within shouted:

"Hit him with the poker! Oh, harder! Make him feel it!"

Mrs. Galloway paused with her finger on the bell. The dining-room windows were open, but the heavy curtains were drawn. She could hear what was said, but could not see what was going on. There was a sound of dull whacks, and the noise of a scrimmage.

"Stop it! Don't, I say! Stop it! You're a brute!" This was in women's voices. Mrs. Galloway turned toward the bishop, speechless.

"Bless me!" said the bishop, anxiously; "this is very strange!"

She tiptoed toward the nearest window, and listened.

"Well, that's no go," some one said. "Try jabbing him with a fruit-knife."

"No; please don't!" cried a woman.

"Suppose he kicks?" said a man.

"If he's a gentleman, he won't kick in a lady's dining-room." This time they recognized Varick's voice.

"Suppose he does!" exclaimed somebody else. "Let him kick! We can't keep him here all night. Mrs. Galloway and the bishop are likely to blow in any

minute. I want you to remember that this is a missionary meeting." There was another laugh.

"That was Charley," whispered Mrs. Galloway. "Do you suppose they've caught a burglar?"

"It may be," replied the bishop. "It's very strange."

"I'll tell you," said Varick's voice. "Try blindfolding him. Take a napkin." There was a general giggling for a moment. "Now hit him gently with a bottle."

"Come on here!" came in angry tones from Galloway. "You can't stop here forever. Get hold, you chaps, and push."

There was a sudden scuffle, and a sound like the tramping of heavy boots.

"Catch the candles!" a woman screamed.

There was a deafening crash of glass and china, and a hubbub of screams and exclamations. A dead silence followed, and then Galloway's voice was heard, unnaturally calm:

"Well, the dinner-table's gone!"

Mrs. Galloway stood petrified. A groom appeared and took the horse.

"What is going on in there?" demanded the bishop. The man moved into the shadow.

"I dunno, sir," he replied in a queer voice. He got into the phaëton, and the bishop and his hostess walked softly along the veranda toward the door.

"I am afraid something terrible has happened," said Mrs. Galloway, tremulously. "Suppose they have killed him?" She drew back, and the bishop went in ahead. They passed down the hall to the dining-room. With a little scream, Mrs. Galloway clutched the door-jamb.

"Thank goodness! Thank goodness!" she murmured. "I thought it was a burglar. Some water, please—quick!"

But the bishop gazed fixedly into the room. "Some water for Mrs. Galloway!" he called huskily.

A horse with a napkin knotted about his neck was in the middle of the room, by the wreck of the dinner-table. Varick was standing the candelabra on the floor, and relighting the bent candles. The others were watching Galloway, the

women with their skirts wrapped about them, prepared for any new catastrophe. When Mrs. Galloway screamed, they turned and regarded her and the bishop.

"My dear," said her husband, "this is an unfortunate occurrence. We need not discuss it. As you did not come home, there was some talk between Colfax and myself which ended in his betting me that I could n't ride Camelot through the house. Now he's in, and we can't get him out. He balked at the lights."

"I think," said Mrs. Galloway, "you had better send for the servants, and clean up this mess. Then I want you to hurry and get that horse out of the room. I told you the last time, when you brought Huron in here, that such things must stop."

"Oh, you've been practising this game, have you?" interrupted Colfax. "I don't think that was square. I'll leave it to the bishop."

"Only with Huron," said Galloway, "and he's sick. I've never had this one in."

"Charley Galloway," said his wife,

"are you going to get that beast out of here or not?"

"Be reasonable, my dear," said Galloway. "I have been trying for half an hour to get him out. I tell you, he 's balked."

"We might put a candle under him," suggested Varick. "There is n't much left to smash."

"Put that candle down!" said his sister-in-law, Mrs. Innis. "This is n't your house or your horse."

"Yes; do put it down," said his wife.

"I don't see what there is to be done," Galloway observed, "except to let him stop here till he gets tired. The rest of us might as well go into the smoking-room."

"Take that horse out of here at once!" said Mrs. Galloway.

"My dear!" protested her husband.

"*At once!*" said Mrs. Galloway.

There was an uneasy silence.

"Mr. Galloway," said the bishop, with some hesitation, "my brougham horse sometimes balks, and I always give him sugar. Have you any sugar?"

Galloway smiled scornfully, but found the coffee-tray and handed him the sugar-bowl. Galloway's smile said: "This is a harmless fancy which may divert my wife; but of course it is impossible to get that horse out of the house by any such nonsense." Varick's answering smile plainly implied: "Why, of course; preposterous, is n't it?"

"Now, my good beast," said the bishop, "here's some sugar." Camelot took two lumps with relish. The bishop patted his neck. "A nice horsey—a nice horsey," he said soothingly. "Here's some more. Come along now, and you shall get the rest of the bowlful." He chirruped softly, and the horse started. Holding the bowl in front of Camelot's muzzle, with stately deliberation the bishop led him through the hall, out upon the veranda, and down the steps. The company, hushed and at a respectful distance, followed, and halted on the veranda.

"Bishop Cunningham," said Mrs. Galloway, "I am very much indebted to you—very much indebted indeed. Mr. Gal-

loway, will you be good enough to order us something to eat, and send for a groom to take this horse?" Mr. Galloway went into the house. "I am distressed, on your account, that this should have happened," she added to the bishop; "and, I admit, somewhat mortified on my own. I cannot help feeling that you must draw the line yourself against horses in the dining-room."

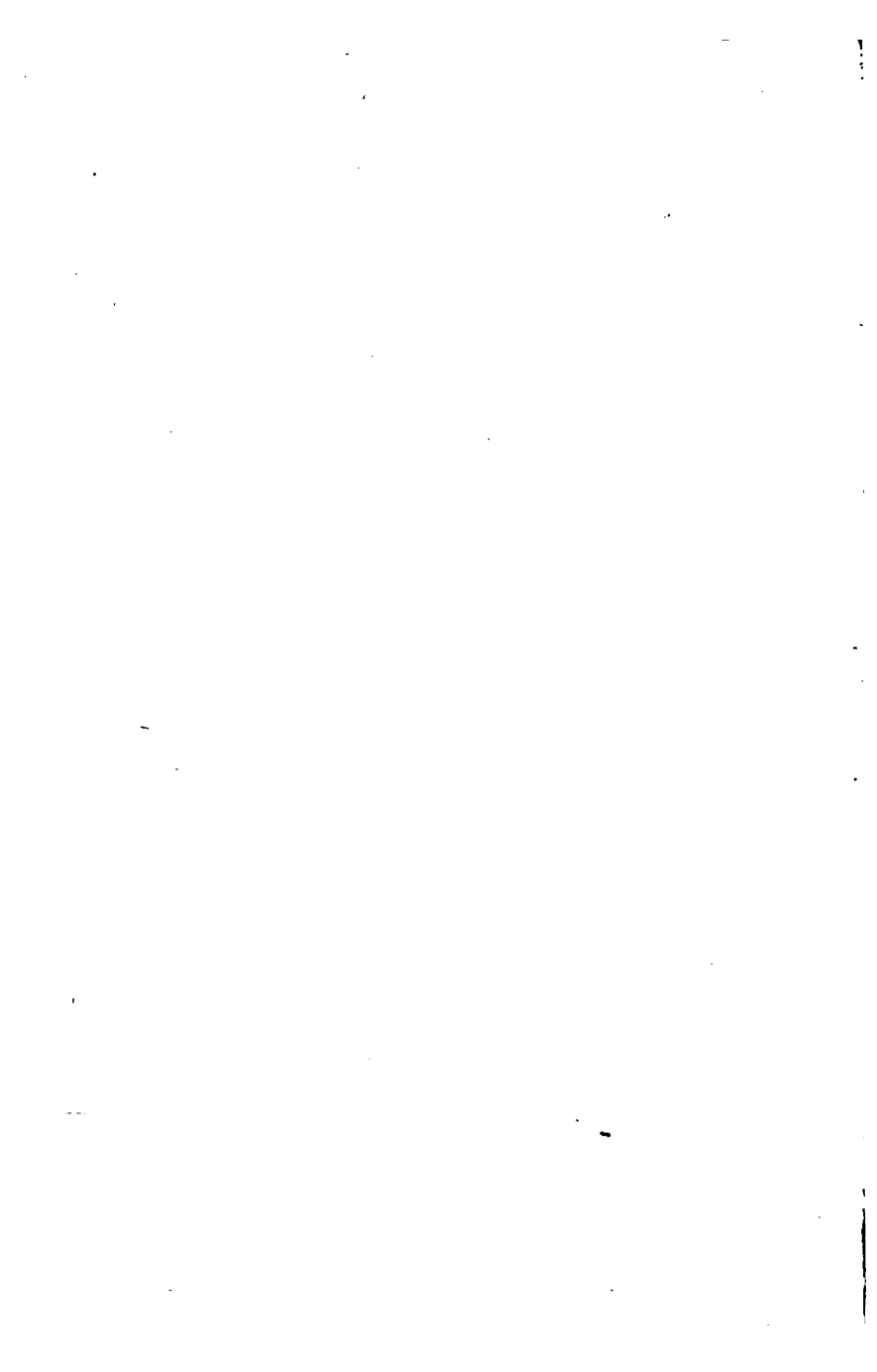
"Please do not speak of it," exclaimed the bishop, with a bow. "I beg of you to let the subject drop."

"You are *so* good!" murmured Mrs. Galloway. She gave a little choke; her nerves were beginning to assert themselves.

"What we all ought to do," said Varick, "is to give three cheers for the bishop, who is a horse-tamer and a brick, and leave this ruined home to its inmates."

"Hold up!" interrupted Willie Colfax. "Cheers are all right, but I want to make a speech first." He turned toward the bishop. "You see, sir, I have just won a hundred from Galloway because he

could n't get that horse out. You *have* got him out, and, considering the matter on the general principles of a sweepstake, you ought to get the hundred. I don't suppose you want the money yourself, so I am starting your missionary subscription with it, and as much more added to fat up the pot. Now, the rest of you fellows, remember you are at a missionary meeting, and do the right thing." And they all did.



HIS FIRST RACE



IX

HIS FIRST RACE

YOUNG Hatfield sat up in bed, and began groping for matches and the candle. He struck a light, and looked at his watch. It was half-past five. He drew a long breath, and tried to recall the nightmare from which he had just escaped. He had been riding furiously, over a vague, gray, boundless country seamed with immense jumps. The dream at first had been confused and misty, but gradually it had turned into a situation where he was alone and helpless, on the back of a mad runaway. Then as he galloped faster and faster toward an enormous fence, the vision grew clear and real—frightfully real. The horse hit, the fall

came, and he was awake, but the crash of breaking rails still jarred in his ears. His heart was thumping with the dream-horror that had come as his horse's head and withers sank under him. He was breathing hard, and his knees felt weak. He had believed that he was dead.

To throw the impression off, he slipped out of bed, and pushed open the shutters. The pines about the Oakdale clubhouse were sighing. Down the valley a southwest wind was herding successive ranks of low, wet clouds. In the first glimmerings of dawn the distant hills were only a darker shadow across the horizon. The gray fields in front of the club sloped dimly, and were lost in the mists on the bottom-lands. Hatfield stretched his arm out, and opened his hand to the wind.

"They 'll race," he muttered; "there 's no frost." He cuddled his hands in his pajama sleeves, and shivered. Then he closed the window, and jumped into bed.

Hatfield had left Forbes's dinner about two o'clock; therefore he needed sleep, but

he knew that it was out of the question. His brain was in that stage of nervous alertness which results from champagne and much coffee, followed by an evening of Scotch and soda. His dream weighed upon him; there was a prophetic vividness about it which he could not put out of mind. He argued that the horse he was going to ride had run many steeplechases, and had never hurt any one. Forbes had told him that, when he offered him the mount. Then an inner voice suggested that this was the more reason for avoiding that horse. Every horse will fall some day. His mind brought up instances of men killed in the hunting-field when mounted on their best. He had known an Englishman killed in that way the winter before. At the end of an hour he felt certain that he was going to be killed, or at least badly hurt, and he tried to be calm about it. He was not superstitious, but presentiments nowadays have a scientific recognition, and he felt sure that a presentiment had come to him. He imagined how he would look in his coffin, and he wondered whether his

mother would come over, or whether they would send him to her. His mother lived in Europe. Then he fell to thinking about the Girl who, at that moment, was asleep at the Alden Adamses', a mile up the road. He wondered if by any freak of thought-transference his dream had come to her.

Suddenly it occurred to him that he was not obliged to ride. ♡ He might be taken ill, and afterward give up hunting altogether. He was ashamed and angry, but he could not put the idea out of his mind. It came back, tempting him with plausible excuses. A little before seven he got up and dressed. Then he took a writing-case from his trunk, and wrote three short notes. Two of these he sealed with his ring. One was addressed to his mother, the second to the Girl who was stopping at the Adamses'. The third was open, and addressed to Forbes. The possibility that, after all, he might be making an ass of himself had occurred to him, and what he wrote was bald and matter-of-fact. He hoped against conviction that he was making an ass of himself. He had much to live for. He

had planned things which it was hard to imagine he was not going to fulfil. He put the envelopes in his writing-case and went down-stairs to wait for breakfast.

Hatfield was twenty-three, and was spoken of as a boy who might amount to a good deal if a comfortable income and half a dozen other pitfalls of youth did not destroy him. Horses were a new fad. As a child he had ridden his pony, but going 'cross country was a fresh experience. When the Girl went to the Alden Adamses' for November, Hatfield had bought a couple of hunters and gone down to Oakdale. He had been out four or five times with the hounds, and the game had ensnared him. His views of life forthwith changed. It seemed only worth while to become and to be known as a "hunting-man." He pinned his stock the way Braybrooke pinned his; he affected Galloway's practice of carrying a cutting-whip instead of a crop; he copied Forbes's seat—that is, until Whitney Corlies came down: after that he modeled himself upon Corlies. He realized that he was a beginner, and

was discreet in his opinions; but he was impatient to acquire a standing. If Corlies had suggested flying the river, Hatfield would have gone at it without hesitation. When Forbes had offered him the mount for the steeplechase, the night before at dinner, he felt that his chance had come.

Forbes knew that Hatfield was green, but he had observed that he rode with his heart in it; and, moreover, there was no one else to put up who could make the weight. He had written to Carty Carteret, offering him the mount, and the day before had received a telegram of regret. Carteret wired that he knew the Rajah, that his accident policy had expired, and that he owed it to his beloved parents to decline. The fact was that Carteret wanted to hunt that day in Philadelphia. The telegram nettled Forbes, because he was sure the horse could win. There were exactly eight other gentlemen at Oakdale each privately holding similar views about his own horse.

When Hatfield went into the breakfast-room he found Corlies there.

"He 's around awfully early," thought Hatfield. But Corlies's ways were not as other men's. Neither did people ask him personal questions. He nodded to the boy.

"Better take your coffee with me," he said.

"I 'd like to," Hatfield answered as calmly as he could. It was a distinction to breakfast with Whitney Corlies. What Corlies did not know about horses, and what he could not do with them, were not things of consequence. He was a lean, finely proportioned man of forty-five. Everything he did he did well and easily. All his life the world had run after him. What he thought about it no one knew, for he rarely spoke. Men as well as women thought him handsome. Meissonier might have painted him as a colonel of cavalry. He was unmarried, and there was a romantic story about him. Once Hatfield had asked Mrs. Innis about it. She looked surprised, and told him that she did n't know the details.

"So you 're riding the Rajah," said Corlies, as the boy sat down.

"Yes," said Hatfield. "I 've never been on his back, and I 've never ridden a race before. I 'm afraid I shall make rather a mess of it."

"He 's a brute at times," observed Corlies. He spread out his paper, and proceeded to take the top off his egg. Presently he spoke again:

"It 's going to be wet. Have you got a braided rein?"

"No," replied Hatfield. "Perhaps Forbes has, though."

"He does n't believe in them," said Corlies. "I 'll have one sent down for you. Your horse bores. I rode him once." The Rajah was an English horse. When he was six years old, and sound, Corlies had ridden him in the Grand National.

"Thank you for the rein," said Hatfield. "It was very good of you to think about it." He was pleased, because he knew that Corlies paid few attentions to men. Besides, he had experienced the difficulty of bringing a bolter's head around with an ordinary wet bridle-rein.

What he had heard about the Rajah was not assuring. A horse that bored was likely to get his head down, and run into a jump without rising. He knew of a man who had been hopelessly crippled by such an accident.

Presently Corlies rose. "Don't you want to see the paper?" he said. He pushed the sheets over the table. "You'd better find out whether Forbes has had the horse sharp-shod. He's careless about such things." He nodded and moved off.

MOST of the men who were going to ride, and a number who were n't, lunched at the club that day. They made a party around the big center-table. It was noticeable that those who were going to look on seemed to be having the best time. They talked most and ate most. The others talked less, and pecked at things with a great show of appetite; some of them drank liberally. Willie Colfax, who sat next to Hatfield, was lunching mainly upon a magnum of Bass.

"Better have some," he suggested politely, for the fourth time.

"No," said Hatfield; "I don't think I'll drink anything. To tell the truth, I don't feel like eating much, either."

Colfax grinned.

"Don't feel much like gorging, myself;" he remarked confidentially. "That's why I've got this." He nodded toward the magnum.

"Are you really feeling that way, too?" Hatfield asked. Colfax had ridden many steeplechases.

"Why, of course," he replied. "It's nothing to be ashamed of. It's just excitement. None of them are really feeding," he went on, waving his hand toward the men who were dressed to ride. "They're just putting up a bluff—that is, all except Corlies. He's colder than ammonia-pipes. I say, Charles," he remarked to Galloway, "have some game-pie. It's hearty, you know. You're a little short of weight."

Galloway laughed.

"Pass it to Hatfield," he said. "If he's

riding the Rajah, it 'll be his last meal on earth, and he ought to make the most of it."

"Oh, shut up!" snapped Forbes. "I 'm sick of hearing you run down my horse. Why have you always wanted to buy him?"

"To feed to the hounds," said Gallo-way, sweetly. "But if he 's all right, why don't you ride him yourself? Why are you always looking for foolhardy boys?"

Forbes declined to reply.

"Don't pay any attention to him," he said to Hatfield. "He knows we have the legs of the lot, with the possible exception of Corlies's mare. We 're going to win."

"Do you really think so?" asked Hatfield. "You know," he added, "I 'm afraid I 'm a hoodoo."

"Nonsense!" said Forbes.

The chaffing went on, and Hatfield fell to studying the faces of the men he was going to ride against. They seemed to him discouragingly unconcerned. He felt drawn to Colfax, who admitted that food

had no fascinations. Yet, if these men were free from apprehension, there could be no real risk. Three of them were married—happily—and had families; they were not indifferent about existence. This was a logical argument, but it carried no conviction.

“When you ’ve finished,” said Forbes, “we might start along. The Rajah ’s at the stables. I thought you might like to walk him down to the course, and get your legs bent over him.”

“Thanks,” said Hatfield; “I should.” He had dressed before lunch, and had a morning-coat over his racing-jacket. Forbes’s colors were very gaudy—scarlet and black hoops. As they reached the stables a coach-horn sounded, and Hatfield looked back. The Alden Adamses’ drag was swinging through the grounds. The crowd had begun to gather. Already the court before the porte-cochère was filled with traps and with men on hacks who were stopping at the club to see the list of starters. The horn sounded again, and the “four” rumbled past.

Hatfield caught a glimpse of the Girl, buttoned up to the chin in a man's mackintosh, but she did n't see him. She was sitting between two loquacious young men who, together with the rest of the party, seemed needlessly jolly. He followed the back of her sailor hat with his eyes till the coach disappeared around the turn that led to the porte-cochère. Suddenly Forbes touched him on the arm, and he felt himself blushing. The Rajah had been led out, and was standing beside him. He turned and clambered into the saddle.

"Take him quietly," said Forbes. "He 's feeling a bit beany, and he may bolt. Your stirrups seem about right. I 'll see you at the post. I 'm going to drive down. There 's a boy waiting for you on the course."

Hatfield followed the path around the stables, and turned into the lane that led down to the great meadow where the steeplechase course was laid. Ahead of him was a dotted line of traps and hooded and blanketed horses moving slowly toward the track. A Hempstead cart with

a lively pony dashed by, and the Rajah shied into the fence. Hatfield lost a stirrup, and the young man in the cart snickered. Hatfield felt that he must be making himself ridiculous. One vehicle after another passed, and he knew that each time the occupants were commenting upon his inexperience. As he reached the meadow he heard the coach-horn again, and turned out. The drag swept by at a canter. The Girl saw him this time, and bowed; but it was a distant, formal little nod, and she knew it. To her, he looked very bored and indifferent. It seemed profitable to her to appear to him much interested in other matters. She did not know she was cruel.

"You 're dining with us, you know!" Adams yelled from the box.

Hatfield nodded. "If I 'm dining anywhere," he murmured. He followed the drag with his eyes. The people on it were having a very good time, and he compared himself with them—particularly with the two insufferable young men. It struck him as a queer misnomer to call

riding steeplechases an amusement. Then he bowed to Galloway, who drove by with the Braybrookes; for Mrs. Galloway would n't come when her husband rode. Galloway was joking with Mrs. Braybrooke, and to all appearances he seemed conspicuously gay. Those familiar with his habits, however, knew that after lunch he usually smoked a cigar; now he was sucking his lungs full of cigarette smoke. Hatfield rode toward the judges' stand, where the scales were, and one of Corlies's grooms came up to him.

"Here 's the racing-rein, sir," said the man. "Mr. Corlies told me I was to put it on the Rajah. You 'll be likely to need it, sir." A little squall burst from the south, driving a fine drizzle across the plain.

"I 'll weigh out while you 're putting it on," said Hatfield. He took the saddle and breastplate, and went to the scales.

"A hundred and sixty-eight," the clerk said. He was three pounds over, but all overweight was allowed. He borrowed a pair of lighter stirrup-irons from a boy on a pony, got his number, and went back to

his horse. Forbes's man came along with a bucket, and began to sponge out the Rajah's mouth. Presently Forbes appeared.

"They're about ready," he said. "You know the course. It's the hurdle, the mound, the brush, and the liverpool of the regular course, and then a two-mile flagged loop over natural fences, back on to the course, over the water and the hurdle, and finish down the regular stretch. That's about four miles, or a little more. The Rajah will last, and jump strong. Don't hurry him, but don't bother him by trying to lie too far back. Let him rate along and make the pace, if he wants to and can. The only mean place is in the loop, coming back, where there's something of a drop on the other side of the hedge fence. Get him well in hand there, and don't try to fly it, or you may come to grief. The committee should n't put such a thing in the course. But I've put a boy there, in case you have a spill. Keep your whip till the stretch. Hello!" he added, "where did you get that rein?"

"Corlies lent it to me," said Hatfield.

Forbes glanced up curiously.

"Corlies?" he repeated. He looked the rein over, and tested its strength. "It 's all right," he muttered,—"of course," he added. "That 's queer for Corlies, though. Give me your coat."

Hatfield stripped it off, and rode away shivering in his colors to the place where the parade was forming. The bugle sounded, and they filed past the line of spectators to the post. He fixed his eyes on his horse's neck, but he was conscious that the gaze of the crowd was on him. His face burned and his head began to swim. He clutched the saddle with his knees, and coaxed the fretful Rajah into line. Suddenly some one said, "Go!" and the race had begun.

The sudden speed took his breath away, and he hung back. He saw that the field were going at the first jump, in two lines. He put his weight on the Rajah's mouth, and fell back into the second. He recognized Corlies as he rose to the hurdle ahead. Corlies sat back leisurely, and

horse and man went over like a single creature. The rest he saw only as a confused line of bobbing figures. The next instant his own horse, with a rush, sprang into the air, landed, and was bolting after the leaders. He pulled him in as he came up on Galloway's off side. Then his strength seemed to ooze out, and he was panting. A horse's head crept up on his right. He glanced around, and saw Corlies, who forged up. They galloped, with their knees almost brushing.

"Steady," said Corlies, quietly; "there's four miles." The boy shut his lips tight, and nodded.

"Can I last four miles?" he began to ask himself. He was determined that he would, but he did not see how it was to be done; he was pumped already. They approached the bank, and the three took it together. He felt the Rajah's knees rub the top sods, but he gained half a length on Galloway in the leap. He realized then what they meant when they called the horse a "close jumper." Presently a warm glow broke over him, and his breath

came more easily. The speed no longer frightened him. It was getting into his blood. His nervous apprehensions vanished. He felt a mad exhilaration coming over him. It was like the fury of the Berserker. "I 'm going to win!" he muttered. Then he suddenly understood why men ride steeplechases. He settled comfortably into the saddle, and took an easier hold on his horse's head. The Rajah was working under him like a steel machine. He flew the brush as if shot from a mortar. A wild thrill went through him, and he caught himself laughing hysterically. He turned in the saddle, and looked back at the field. Galloway was pounding along on his left, a length behind. Braybrooke was lapping Galloway, still farther out. Directly in the rear was Colfax, and behind him came the rest in a bunch. On his right, and galloping neck and neck, was Corlies. As they neared the liverpool he became aware that Galloway was drawing up. Corlies called sharply :

"Don't let him head you here!"

Afterward Hatfield found out what this advice meant. At that time he merely acted upon it. He glanced back anxiously, and felt for the cutting-whip, tucked under his leg. But the Rajah was holding Galloway stride for stride, and they flew the liverpool three abreast. The course bore to the right, and led over a board fence into a corn-field. The going grew heavy, and he felt his mount struggling ankle-deep. Instinctively he checked him to a hand-gallop. He knew that he had done right when he saw Corlies take in his rein and keep by his side.

With a whoop Galloway went by, Braybrooke followed, and Colfax came alongside. A clod of mud from Braybrooke's horse plastered Hatfield's cheek. In a moment they rose to the next fence, and were on good turf again. He heard a crash, and, twisting around, saw some one fall. "Some one 's down!" he said to Corlies. Corlies nodded. They began to overtake Braybrooke and Galloway. He saw Galloway clap in his heels, and again he felt nervously for his whip; but he re-

membered his orders, and did not take it out. A series of fierce puffs of wind suddenly checked them appreciably and another rain squall broke down the valley, and met them in the face. The water filled his eyes, and he lost track of distance and direction. He saw two blurred figures ahead, and followed them. Looking down, the earth seemed a brown-green tide that rushed by. Suddenly to the right he made out the flags on the fence he was nearing, and realized that he was out of the course. The Rajah put his head down, and bored still farther to the left. He leaned forward, took the rein up short, and swung him back, barely in time to go over the rails inside the streamer. He lost his stirrups in landing, and groped for the swinging irons. He was half-way across the field before he got them. His thigh muscles were limp, and he was rocking in the saddle. "It must be half over," he thought. They were nearing a hedge faced with a board fence. The Rajah rose, and that instant Hatfield saw the drop on the farther side. He had forgot-

ten Forbes's instructions to shorten his pace. He hunched his shoulders for a fall; but the old horse collected himself, and landed with his fore legs well away. Hatfield went up on his neck, but scrambled back and got his stirrups again.

Braybrooke and Galloway were dropping back. Corlies was still on his quarter, to the right. They rounded the loop, and with the next jump turned on to the steeplechase course again. If the horse lasted, he knew now that it lay between him and Corlies. He gritted his teeth, and tried to steady his seat. But inch by inch Corlies drew up and forged past. Hatfield took the water two lengths behind him, and the Rajah was beginning to lean upon the bit. The spring had gone out of his stride, but he kept to his work. He was four lengths behind when Corlies went at the last hurdle. This was built solidly of new rails. Suddenly Hatfield knew that Corlies's mare had taken off too soon. She seemed to hang a moment, and then to shoot heels over head directly in his path. He put his weight

on the Rajah's mouth, and swung him close to the wing on the left. The checked horse floundered into the hurdle, and bucked weakly over. As he landed, Hatfield saw Corlies's mare roll across her rider and scramble up; but Corlies lay motionless on his side in front of the middle of the jump. Hatfield heard Galloway and Braybrooke galloping up. He flung himself to the ground beside the unconscious man.

"Look out!" Galloway yelled. He was taking off on the other side. Braybrooke was beside him. The boy caught Corlies under the armpits, and staggered back, as the two horses landed. He saw the Rajah and the mare go off with them down the stretch. Then he bent over the injured man, and tore open his racing-jacket. Underneath, Corlies wore a flannel waistcoat. Hatfield unbuttoned it and felt for the heart. Some papers in an elastic band slipped out of the inside pocket and fell to the ground. The heart was faintly beating, and Hatfield sat down with the man's head in his lap. He himself was

"done." He saw Colfax come over the hurdle, then another and another. Then a man rode around the jump to where he was and dismounted. It was Varick.

"Is he bad?" he panted.

"I don't know," said Hatfield. Presently some men rode up on ponies, and a farmer came with a wagon. They lifted Corlies in, and went off toward the finish. Hatfield slipped Corlies's papers into his hip pocket, and walked slowly after them with Varick, who was leading his horse.

"You pulled him out, did n't you?" asked Varick. "He had a close call."

Hatfield nodded. "St. Lawrence seems pumped," he said, glancing at Varick's dripping horse. "It was fast, was n't it?"

Varick grinned dismally. "St. Larry has had enough. That was an awful corn-field."

They went on in silence to the crowd which had gathered about the wagon, and met Colfax on the edge of it.

"Charley Galloway won," he said. He looked at Hatfield. "You gave it away. You might have won as you liked."

"How 's Whitney?" asked Varick.

"All right," Colfax answered. "He 's come to. The wind was rolled out of him, and a couple of ribs cracked. You can't kill him. Good race, was n't it? I wish I had n't drunk so much ale," he added to Hatfield. "I 'm far from well."

Then Forbes came up.

"Well, I lost the race for you," said Hatfield. "I 'm sorry." He was not sorry, though. He was only surprised at the suggestion that he might have left Corlies there and won it. He was new at steeplechasing.

"It 's all in the game," said Forbes. "One 's got to learn. He carried you well, did n't he? Here are your coats."

The people and the vehicles were beginning to scatter, and Hatfield got into Varick's trap and drove home. As they turned into the club grounds, Adams's horn sounded, and the drag went by.

"Remember, dinner at eight!" Adams shouted. Then the Girl bowed again—it seemed to Hatfield, quite differently this time. It was a bow that gave him a very

comfortable feeling. He caught a second glimpse of the two youths, and was surprised that he had ever envied them. They were only a pair of pasty-faced "dancing men."

AFTER the race, most of the men gathered in the club for drinks and discussion; but Hatfield went to his room. He lighted his fire, and rang for his tub and hot water. Then he took the three letters from his writing-case, and burned them. He was tired, but his nerves were pleasurably drowsy. He sat down and watched the blazing sticks with a delicious animal contentment. His thoughts were agreeable ones. There was a new feeling of confidence in himself, and a consciousness of power that he had never had before. He had a curious sense, too, of having suddenly grown older, and it pleased him.

The evening came on, and he was getting ready for dinner when a servant knocked, and told him that Corlies would like to see him. He recollected the papers which he had forgotten to return, took them from

his breeches pocket, and went to the injured man's room. Corlies lay in bed. The doctor had cleaned him up and banded his ribs. His left arm was sprained and lay across his breast in a sling. He smiled as Hatfield came in.

"You see, I 'm all right," he said. "Sore, though. Much obliged to you. They 've just told me about it. You could have won, you know."

The boy laughed. "I don't know about that," he said. "Anyway, I should n't have deserved it, if I had won. I was in a horrible funk before the race." He hesitated a moment. "I might as well confess it," he went on; "I even had a farewell letter all written to my mother. By the way," he added, "I opened your shirt when you were down, and these bills and things got loose. I forgot to send them in."

Corlies looked up anxiously. "Oh, thanks," he said. "I was wondering what had become of that." He stretched out his well arm and took the packet. With his fingers he worked off the rubber band, and

glancing over the envelops, laid them on the bedclothes.

"Is everything there?" asked Hatfield.

Corlies nodded and smiled. He seemed relieved. "You rode a good race," he said. "You kept your head."

The boy flushed with pleasure.

"Of course, it was my first," he answered. "I hope next time I won't be so rattled."

"Your *first*," repeated Corlies, musingly. "It was pretty nearly my *last*. I thought it was going to be. I had a presentiment that the mare was coming over on me when she hit. But you will ride well," he added. "I should n't worry about funking. You know, a man can even be afraid and ride tolerably well." He smiled. "You spoke about the letter you wrote. Well, I've carried a letter in every race I've ridden for twenty years." He felt absent-mindedly for the papers in front of him, blundered, and sent them sliding down the coverlet off the bed. Instinctively Hatfield stooped to gather them up. "Never mind," said Corlies. "No; don't!" he called sharply.

But the boy already had got them, and was standing, bent over, his eyes fixed on a worn envelop that bore the name "Hatfield." He would have doubted his sight, but the writing was very plain. There in his hand was a letter addressed to his own mother. What did it mean? A train of strange thoughts flashed through his brain; the blood rushed into his cheeks. He straightened up and fixed his eyes, angry and questioning, on Corlies's face. The sick man met his gaze frankly, and for a time they looked into each other's eyes. Suddenly understanding came to Hatfield, and his anger faded into pity, his indignation into respect. He turned his head away, and held out the packet.

With his good hand Corlies motioned it back.

"Read it," he murmured.

The boy shook his head, and dropped the letters on the bed. Then the shadow of a smile, sad and gentle, rested an instant on the sick man's mouth, a strange tenderness flashed in his eyes, and again his face became grave and expressionless.

"Yes," he said slowly; "I thought this time that it was all up. It was an ugly spill." He stopped, and turned his eyes to the ceiling. "It's a good way to go, though," he said presently; "is n't it?—quick, and without any fuss."

"Yes; that's so," said Hatfield. Then he remembered his dinner at the Adamses'. "That is, if one wants to go; but I'm hardly ready yet. Is there anything I can do for you?" he added. "You see, I'm dining out, and I'm afraid my trap's waiting. I'll look in, of course, when I come back."

There was no answer. Corlies had closed his eyes, and seemed to be falling into a doze. Then Hatfield drew the shade around the candle, and tiptoed out.

CARTY CARTERET'S SISTER



X

CARTY CARTERET'S SISTER

"**E**LEANOR," said Miss Carteret, "I'd like a trap at half-past eleven. Mr. Bennings and I want to drive over to Captain Forbes's. And you 'll come?" she added to Willie Colfax.

He nodded affably, and helped himself to marmalade. Mr. Bennings looked annoyed.

"We 're going to buy horses," she continued. "That is, I 'm going to buy *one*. Mr. Bennings, I believe, is going to buy a drove."

Mr. Bennings raised his hand in deprecation.

"Aw—I say, not a drove; just a few likely ones," he remarked.

"Polly Carteret," said Mrs. Braybrooke,

"you 're an extravagant goose! What in the world will you do with a horse?"

"I shall give him sugar," Miss Carteret replied. "That will be one thing."

Mr. James Braybrooke stared at her, gathered up the sporting-pages of the newspaper, and left the table.

"You 're impossible!" said Mrs. Braybrooke. She went to the window, and looked out. The Braybrookes' breakfast-room commanded a stretch of rolling lawn set with mighty oaks. The Indian-summer sun was streaming down upon it.

"You see, Mr. Bennings," observed Miss Carteret, "this is the way they encourage me to patronize Oakdale horses. When I was little I did n't care much about horses, and Eleanor used to make me feel that my life was a failure. Now I want to buy a horse, and she calls me extravagant."

"It 's getting married," volunteered Willie Colfax. "Don't do it. You lose your nerve and grow economical. One 's always thinking about the little ones who have to be educated and set up in life. Please, more coffee, Nell," he added.

Mrs. Braybrooke colored.

"Don't irritate your sister," said Miss Carteret. "I 'll pour it."

Mr. Bennings seemed to have something on his mind. He held the marmalade-jar suspended in air.

"But—aw, I say," he observed seriously, "really, now, a *good* nag, you know, is not a bad investment."

Mrs. Braybrooke turned from the window, and regarded him with something like a sniff.

"But she does n't know a good one. Now, I say, if you don't know horses, just be a lady; only don't pretend. And, Polly Carteret, you don't know any more about horses than"—she looked about as if for a comparison, but found none which was adequate—"than *THAT!*" she exclaimed. "And the way you *talk* is ridiculous."

"Mr. Bennings," said Miss Carteret, mildly, "do you believe her?" Mr. Bennings deemed himself rather discerning about women.

"No, 'pon my word, Mrs. Braybrooke," he replied, "honestly, now, I can't believe

that, you know. You misunderstand Miss Carteret; you really do. We had a long conversation last evening, and she impressed me as very well informed—unusually well informed. Perhaps not so keen about racin', you know, but very well up on huntin'-cattle." He set down the marmalade-jar, and glanced at Miss Carteret for a smile of gratitude; and Miss Carteret smiled.

"There!" she said to Mrs. Braybrooke; "I told you I had learned about horses. Don't be so superior."

Mrs. Braybrooke shot a glance at Bennings, and her nostrils quivered.

"When you finish, come into the morning-room," she remarked. "I want to find Jimmy." She went out, followed by her brother, who was trying to lead her into a discussion of some ideas relative to matrimony.

"I say," said Bennings, when they were alone,—he spoke confidentially,—"*you were chaffin', don't you know, about buyin' a nag to feed him sugar?*"

"I *was* chaffing," replied Miss Carteret.

"You 'caught on,' so to speak, very quickly. Seriously, I should never think of buying a horse just to have something to feed sugar to. With so many poor people who can't afford sugar, it would n't be ethical."

"That 's so," said Bennings; "but at first it *did* sound just a bit odd, you know. It was a capital joke, though," he added; "and I *do* like a joke."

She dropped her eyelids.

"I could see that," she said. "I can't tolerate people who don't like jokes."

"You don't say so!" he exclaimed. "That 's very interesting. You know," he continued, "that 's the only thing I have against an Englishman. Awfully good sort, but no sense of fun, you know. I 've been over there a good deal, but I can't get used to that. I call it the national defect. This chap, you know,—Mark Twain,—he 's noticed the same thing about 'em." This was Bennings's stock conversation on the English people.

"That 's very interesting, too," observed Miss Carteret. "Will you be ready at half-past eleven?"

"At your service—always," he exclaimed, jumping up. Then she went out, and left him to his eggs.

P. St. Clair Bennings had arrived at Oakdale the afternoon before. The last time Braybrooke had gone to town he had met him at the club, and they had lunched together. As it was October, they naturally discussed hunting-stables, and Braybrooke asked him down to look over Forbes's string before it went to the Horse Show. Bennings was glad to come, and he was pleased to find Miss Carteret stopping there, because he ranked women only after horses. Miss Carteret had made rather quick work with him. He already considered her a "devilish fine girl," and an inner voice had begun to ask whether it might not be generous to shorten his visit. When Bennings first came into his money he bravely faced the fact that he could not both hunt and marry, so he put the latter out of his mind. He had sojourned long in Great Britain (as unkind persons intimated, to make amends for having been born in a New Jersey manu-

facturing town), and, moreover, by nature he had been endowed with an earnest rather than an acute intellect. There was not much more to be said about him. He rode fairly well. His clothes were distinctive. His speech was that version of the cockney speech of England which is peculiar to the "*American malgré lui.*"

Miss Carteret was a school friend of Mrs. Braybrooke's. Their mothers had been connected in some way. She lived in Washington, but she had been born on the James River, which accounted for a throaty, Southern quality in her voice. She spoke slowly, and in her accent there was a soft echo of colored mammies which was attractive. Overlooking such artificial classifications as by complexion and by morals, girls seem to fall into two categories. The members of the first inspire esteem and nothing more. A woman belongs to the second when men simultaneously pick up her handkerchief and lurk in wait to put hassocks under her feet. Conversely, a woman's habit of confidently dropping things is also a sign of the type.

Miss Carteret continually was shedding her handkerchiefs and other portables, and, as a rule, all the available men were adjacent, and anxious to restore them. She was tall and blonde, with a double allowance of pleasing red hair, and her eyes were of a curious dark-blue color. As she herself had remarked, she was intelligent without being hampered by an education.

THE trap which came to the door at half-past eleven was Willie Colfax's tandem. Colfax had suggested this substitution of vehicles to avoid the possibility of being packed in behind, and Miss Carteret had accepted it gracefully. She liked anything which increased the probability of something happening. "I 'm sure Mr. Bennings won't mind," she remarked; "and if he does, he won't say so."

She got into the high cart beside Colfax, and looked down pleasantly.

"I do hope, Mr. Bennings," she said, "that you really don't mind sitting in behind with the man, and riding backward. And if you 'll get my parasol—I left it on

a chair in the hall; and please ask my maid for my field-glasses; they 're in my room. You know," she explained to Willie Colfax, "I 'm getting near-sighted, and I 'm going to look at these horses critically. Besides, the leather case is rather smart."

"Rubbish!" ejaculated Colfax, jerking the wheeler, who was restless. "Oh, hurry up, Bennings!" he bawled.

Presently Mr. Bennings appeared, somewhat out of breath, and climbed up behind, with the parasol and glasses.

"Now, if you 'll hold them," remarked Miss Carteret, "I guess we 're all ready." She waved her hand to Mrs. Braybrooke, and they drove off. "Good-by, Eleanor!" she called. "I 'm going to buy such a nice horsey!"

Mrs. Braybrooke surveyed her with disapproval.

"Jimmy dear," she remarked, when the cart was out of sight, "please, like a good boy, have something saddled, and ride over there. That girl will do something idiotic, and make us ridiculous."

"Why don't you muzzle her?" said

Braybrooke. "She's your friend." Then he went in, and telephoned to the stables.

AS the tandem swung into Forbes's smooth driveway, Mr. Bennings caught a fragment of the conversation which was going on behind him. Thus far he had been occupied in keeping in, for the roads were bad, and they had galloped most of the way. "Well, those are my ideas about horses," Miss Carteret was saying. "I believe in judging a horse according to the things you want him for, just as you would judge dogs or furniture. Seriously, don't you?" She laughed a little.

"You'll be the death of me," replied Mr. Colfax. "Brace up, and don't make a holy show of yourself. You can make Nell and Jimmy as hot as you want, only behave when you're with me. You don't seem to have any reverence." Bishop Cunningham once had made this comment to him, and he remembered it. Mr. Colfax's acquaintance with Miss Carteret dated from the nursery, and warranted a certain freedom. "Great Scott!" he ex-

claimed, catching a glimpse of the veranda, "there 's about a million men there."

"Shall we go back?" inquired Miss Carteret.

"Don't be foolish," he muttered. He made a spectacular turn, and laid his thong over the leader. Bennings caught himself when he was nearly out, and twisted around on the seat.

"But it 's all right, you know," he remarked. "Forbes is a married man. It will be all right, Miss Carteret."

"Then of course we need n't go back," replied Miss Carteret. "Thank you, Mr. Bennings. I feel much more comfortable. I 'm rather glad, now, that they 're there. They can help us to choose, can't they?"

"Why, of course," he said doubtfully. "They are all the fellows, you know, from the club. They 've come over to see 'em led out."

There was a chorus of "Good mornings" as the cart drew up, and a dozen men in tweed breeches and morning-coats lifted their hats and took their smoking-things out of their mouths.

"Glad to see you," said Forbes, coming down the steps. He had been presented to Miss Carteret before. "The show is waiting. How are you, Bennings? You too, Willie?"

"Quite well, dear boy," replied Mr. Colfax. "Send somebody to stand by my leader while Cook gets the reins. I'm going to send 'em to the stable."

Miss Carteret stood up to be helped out, and the dozen men came forward to assist. Miss Carteret could radiate, so to speak, her appreciation of the civil intentions of strangers, and all the while be impassive and good form. People who had studied her said she did it with her eyes, and it may have been so. At any rate, it was a gift which did not lessen her powers of arousing interest.

"The Oakdale Raleigh," observed Varick, nodding toward Chalmers, "will spread his coat over the wheel, and you may descend."

Chalmers blushed, and performed that service. Thereupon Miss Carteret got down altogether successfully. She wore exceptionally good boots, for a woman.

"May I present these fortunate men?" asked Varick. "We shall then suffer Forbes to go ahead with his equine paradox." At this moment a groom appeared, leading a big raw-boned bay gelding, which he proceeded to trot around the circle of turf in front of the house. A serious silence fell upon the company.

"He 's not very much to look at yet," Forbes remarked; "but he 's clever, and is going to make a serviceable horse in any kind of going. What do you think of him, Bennings?"

"A bit rough—a bit rough, old chap," Mr. Bennings replied regretfully. "Don't you agree with me, Miss Carteret?"

"Oh, quite," said Miss Carteret. "Positively malicious. I don't like his color, either, and he 's too thin."

Colfax suddenly guffawed, and the men regarded him curiously, and asked him whether he was in pain.

"By Jove—'*malicious*'!" exclaimed Mr. Bennings. "That 's capital! And you *are* correct about his condition. At least, that 's my idea," he added, with a deferential glance at the rest of the com-

pany. "I must have more flesh at this time of year—ten stone more, at least." Miss Carteret looked at him out of the corner of her eye. "Really, now, Forbes, that fellow would n't last the season," he went on. "But his color will assuredly brighten. Oh, yes; his color will brighten."

"Do you think so?" asked Miss Carteret. "I'm very particular about color."

"And quite right—and quite right!" exclaimed Mr. Bennings. "The Duke of Beaufort lays great stress on color. Says you can invariably tell condition by it. Lord Wicke disregards it, but I admit I agree with the duke. It takes a clever eye, though—a devilish clever eye!"

"I'm glad to hear you say that," said Miss Carteret. "You know, people sometimes laugh at me for judging horses by their color." She was on the point of remarking that she preferred circus horses, with black and white geographical divisions, when Forbes spoke:

"I'll have to tell you that if you take anything, I must reserve the right to show in November. I've got them all entered,

you see, and they 're being schooled for the green classes."

"Of course that 's all right, Captain Forbes," Miss Carteret answered, with a smile. "And you can keep all the prizes, too; only you really must give me the blue ribbons. I shall have a glass case made, and pin them up in rows." The men laughed, and Varick remarked that it was a very good way to store blue ribbons, only he had never tried it himself.

"I say," whispered Bennings to Colfax, "she 's a tremendous chaffer; ain't she?"

"Is she?" replied Mr. Colfax.

The talk subsided again as a second horse appeared. It was a big, well-made chestnut with a free, sweeping action, and a showy way of carrying its head.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Mr. Bennings. "Now, here we are! That 's a rare good one—regular old-country type, is n't it?" He looked at Miss Carteret.

She hesitated a moment, and surveyed the animal.

"Without doubt," she replied. "I sup-

pose," she added gravely, "they must call him Jenson or Black-letter."

"Yes, of course," said Bennings. He kept his eyes on the horse. "Now, that one will jump like a buck, I'll wager. Look at his quarters! Ah, what a pair of breeches!" he ejaculated soulfully. "Lovely shoulder, too, is n't it?" Miss Carteret nodded approvingly. "I say, Forbes," he called, "ask your head lad to move him round again, will you? What's the price on him?"

"Fifteen hundred," answered Forbes. "He's up to any weight. You can see that yourself. What do you think of him, Miss Carteret?"

Miss Carteret gasped, but disguised it in a little cough. The folly of spending several satisfactory gowns on one beast struck her forcibly.

"Well," she said, "this is a rather more expensive type than I want."

"You are quite right," observed Mr. Bennings, as Forbes moved off. "You know, there is no sense in paying for weight one does n't need, is there? What do you ride at?"

Miss Carteret thought earnestly.

"Really," she replied, "I don't know exactly." She was on the point of adding that she had never ridden at anything, but checked herself.

Bennings looked at her critically. "I should say about ten stone," he observed.

"I dare say that's just it," she answered. "In fact, I know it is. I remember, now, distinctly."

"I *have* a rather good eye for weight," he remarked. "Hello! here's Braybrooke. What's up, old chap? Thought you were n't coming."

"Changed my mind," replied Mr. Braybrooke. "Good lot, are n't they?" He gave his horse to a groom.

"They've only begun," said Bennings. "I fancy this chestnut, though. He must be better than three quarters bred, and excellent bone, too. By the way, if you'll pardon me, you know, Mrs. Braybrooke certainly *was* mistaken this morning. That girl, you know, has a capital eye, and, by Jove, understands color uncommonly well. She called it on a rangy bay that ought to be fleshed for six months. And you know,

old chap, that 's a deuced fine point." Braybrooke glanced apprehensively toward the group of men, and fell to studying a cow in the field beyond. "But of course she ought to be a keen one," added Mr. Bennings. "She's Carty Carteret's sister. You know, I was with Carty at Melton last winter, when he went through thirty minutes with a broken shoulder-blade."

"Really!" observed Braybrooke. He was still considering the cow.

As the next horse was led out, he caught Miss Carteret's eye, and beckoned her aside. "Have you bought anything yet?" he inquired.

She shook her head.

"Well, as a personal favor, I wish you would n't. You see, we've got a stable full that you can ride whenever you want, and you'd only pay twelve or fifteen hundred for something that would be very likely too much for you when you got him. If you must own something, pick up a cheap pony to hack about."

"All right," said the girl. "You're really a very nice boy, Jimmy, and I don't

like to tease you. But you need n't say anything to Captain Forbes."

Just then Forbes and Varick came up.

"What do you think of this one?" inquired Forbes, nodding toward a well-turned little black mare.

"Perfectly sweet," Miss Carteret answered. "But I think I'll watch the rest from the veranda. It's too hot here." She turned to Varick. "Will you come up and tell me all about them?" she asked.

He looked at her curiously.

"I dare say you know a great deal more about such things than I do," he said. He dragged a steamer-chair into position. "You see, I'm only an amateur, a diletante,"—he noted the way she was turned out,—“and you—well, you're Carty Carteret's sister."

She threw her head back and laughed.

"Two weeks ago," she said, "I read six pages of a book called 'The Anatomy of the Horse.' That's all I know. You see," she went on confidentially, "Eleanor and Carty have made my life a burden. The

more they talked horse, the more I despised the whole thing. But you *are* out of it here if you don't like horses, so when Nell asked me down I thought I'd try a new tack. You see, I've suspected all along that they did n't understand half the things they said. They just mumble gibberish, like that unfortunate Mr. Bennings—now, don't they?"

"I must decline to answer," replied Varick. "It might incriminate me."

"There, I knew it!" she exclaimed triumphantly. "I just decided to cram up a little, and look knowing; and then I got all these clothes. I knew I could fool them. I can't take in Nell and Willie, of course; so I practise on them, and when they tell me I'm foolish I know enough not to say *that* again. It's really been amusing. Mr. Bennings thoroughly believes in me." She stopped, and watched the little knots of men in the roadway. "Are all those grown men honestly poring over that horse?" she asked.

"They are," said Varick. "An occasion like this is a sacrament to them."

"How funny it is, when you think about it!" she exclaimed. "And do they really find out all sorts of things when they feel his legs and look at his teeth?"

"They really do," said Varick. "In a rudimentary way, I can do it myself."

"Well," she sighed, "it's beyond me. It's like a telegraph ticking. I hear it, but I can't understand what it means. I know a white horse from a brown one, and I have a preference for long tails, which I consider sensible. You see, when you are driving, it's the tail you see most of, is n't it? A system of judging horses by their tails would appeal to me. But what difference does it make whether a horse has fluted colonial legs, or smooth round ones? Absolutely none!"

"Please, a little lower," suggested Varick. "Somebody might hear."

She laughed.

"But seriously," she continued, "I *should* like to get a horse with a long tail. My father insists on having his horses docked, and I'm sick of them. They did n't use to do it. My grandfather used

to take me driving with a pair of thoroughbreds that had tails that touched the ground, and they could trot—I don't know how fast!—in a minute, I think."

"Do you remember," said Varick, artlessly, "that there was a time—you must remember it—when your mother wore very tight sleeves?"

"Thank you," she replied. "I 've trunks full of them myself. But people are the only animals silly enough to have fashions. It 's wicked to put horses on the same basis."

She looked down the lawn toward the gateway, where something passing behind the shrubbery attracted her attention. In a moment a fat, undersized gray horse jogged into view, drawing a shabby Hempstead cart. Presently he subsided into a sober walk. From his rough coat and fetlocks he seemed to be of Percheron origin. As he drew nearer a fly attacked him, and he switched a superb tail.

"There!" exclaimed Miss Carteret. "That is the kind of horse I really want. Just look at that tail!"

"Good heavens," cried Varick, "but you must n't!"

She seemed not to hear him.

"Do you think," she went on, "that no one would take me seriously if I bought that horse?" Varick chuckled. "I have a little plan," she added, and went down the steps.

"Glad to see you are going to join us again," said Mr. Bennings, bowing profusely.

"Mr. Bennings," said Miss Carteret, "if I buy a horse, will you ride him home?"

Mr. Bennings beamed.

"My dear Miss Carteret," he cried, "*anything!* Anywhere!"

"Thank you so much," she said sweetly. She turned away, and went over to Forbes and Galloway.

"Captain Forbes," she said, "Mr. Bennings has promised to ride my horse home. He's been very nice to me, and I really think he would like to do it. Besides, he is a good horseman, and I feel that I can trust him. I want to buy that gray horse in the cart."

Forbes and Galloway looked at each other and then at Mr. Bennings. They showed symptoms of exploding.

"Please be very serious," she said. "What's his name, and how much is he?"

"His name," replied Forbes, gravely, "is Birdofreedom, and he does my marketing. I have never considered offering him for sale. He is worth about fifty dollars to me, though that may be extortionate."

"It is," said Galloway; "say ten."

"No," replied Miss Carteret; "I'm not going to bargain with you. I'll send you a check to-morrow for fifty dollars. Will you have him saddled and brought down when the cart comes? I don't want to keep Mr. Bennings waiting. No," she replied to Forbes's invitation; "we can't stop to lunch. We promised Mrs. Braybrooke we'd be back. Besides, I want her to see my horse. You know, she thinks I don't know anything about horses."

"I say," gasped Galloway, his sides shaking, "Bennings will never get over this!"

"Get over what?" said Miss Carteret, innocently. She nodded to Varick, and he joined her. "I've bought him," she said, "and Mr. Bennings is going to ride him home. You won't tell about our talk, will you?"

Varick replied with difficulty.

"No," he said; "I am your dumb slave. Hello! there's your trap."

Willie Colfax drove up to the old-fashioned horse-block, and stopped.

"Better hurry up!" he called. "We're late now. Good-by, Forbes; sorry we can't stop."

"Sorry too," said Forbes. He turned to Miss Carteret, and helped her up. "They're getting your horse out as fast as possible. Bennings won't mind waiting. We'll give him something to drink."

"Very well," said Miss Carteret. "Perhaps I would just as soon *not* see Mr. Bennings start off. You won't mind waiting a minute?" she called to him. "You can overtake us, you know, and Jimmy will wait, too. Good-by."

"What was all that?" demanded Willie

Colfax. He swung his thong, and the horses went away at a gallop.

Miss Carteret explained. What she said was accurate, as far as it went. She considered it unnecessary, however, to dwell upon her own feelings toward Birdofreedom.

"Well," said Mr. Colfax, "you 're a peach!"

"And you 'll wait and let them catch up?" she asked.

"We certainly must give Nell the procession effect," he observed. Instead of waiting, however, he tore around a two-mile loop, which brought them to the Braybrookes' gateway just as Braybrooke and Mr. Bennings were arriving.

Mrs. Braybrooke was on the steps as they drove up. They were late.

"What 's that Mr. Bennings is riding?" she demanded.

"That," said Miss Carteret, proudly, "is my horse."

Birdofreedom approached, and Mrs. Braybrooke studied him.

"Polly Carteret!" she exclaimed,—it

was almost a scream,—“what on earth do you mean?—Jimmy!”

“He ’s virtually sound,” said Braybrooke.

His wife turned and stalked into the house.

“There, now, Mr. Bennings,” said Miss Carteret, mournfully, “you see how a horse will separate friends!”

“Aw—certainly,” said Mr. Bennings. “Will you kindly ring for somebody from the stables?” His manner was stiff. He realized that he had overrated Miss Carteret’s eye for horse-flesh. “Just fawncy buyin’ such a brute!” he said to himself. “Just fawncy!” The girl was a disappointment. It mortified him to misjudge people, and he went back to town that night.

ACCORDING to the account which Varick afterward gave Miss Carteret of Forbes’s lunch-party, it had been notable for two reasons. First, “horse” was neglected in a manner without precedent.

“You see,” said Varick, “it was unanimously concluded, something more than a

dozen times, that you were a bully girl, and had revenged the American people on that ass Bennings. That took up nearly all the time. And besides the absence of 'horse,' there was an interesting display of woman nature. When Mrs. Forbes heard the story, she remarked in her quiet way: 'Well, I don't see how there was any joke on Mr. Bennings. I just think that girl took a fancy to Birdofreedom, and I 'm sorry he 's sold. He had *such a lovely tail!*' Naturally the laugh was on Mrs. Forbes." Here both Varick and Miss Carteret smiled. "You know, she distinguishes a horse from a cow, and that 's about all. She devotes her life to six children. When we had got through enjoying the joke, Forbes said reproachfully (it mortifies him to have his wife display her ignorance): 'Perhaps you don't know, my dear, that she 's Carty Carteret's sister. If you think best, I 'll explain about Bennings later.' "

When Varick finished this recital Miss Carteret extended her hand and let him

hold it longer than was really necessary. She was a very honorable girl about recognizing her obligations.

"I shall keep away from Mrs. Forbes," she said.

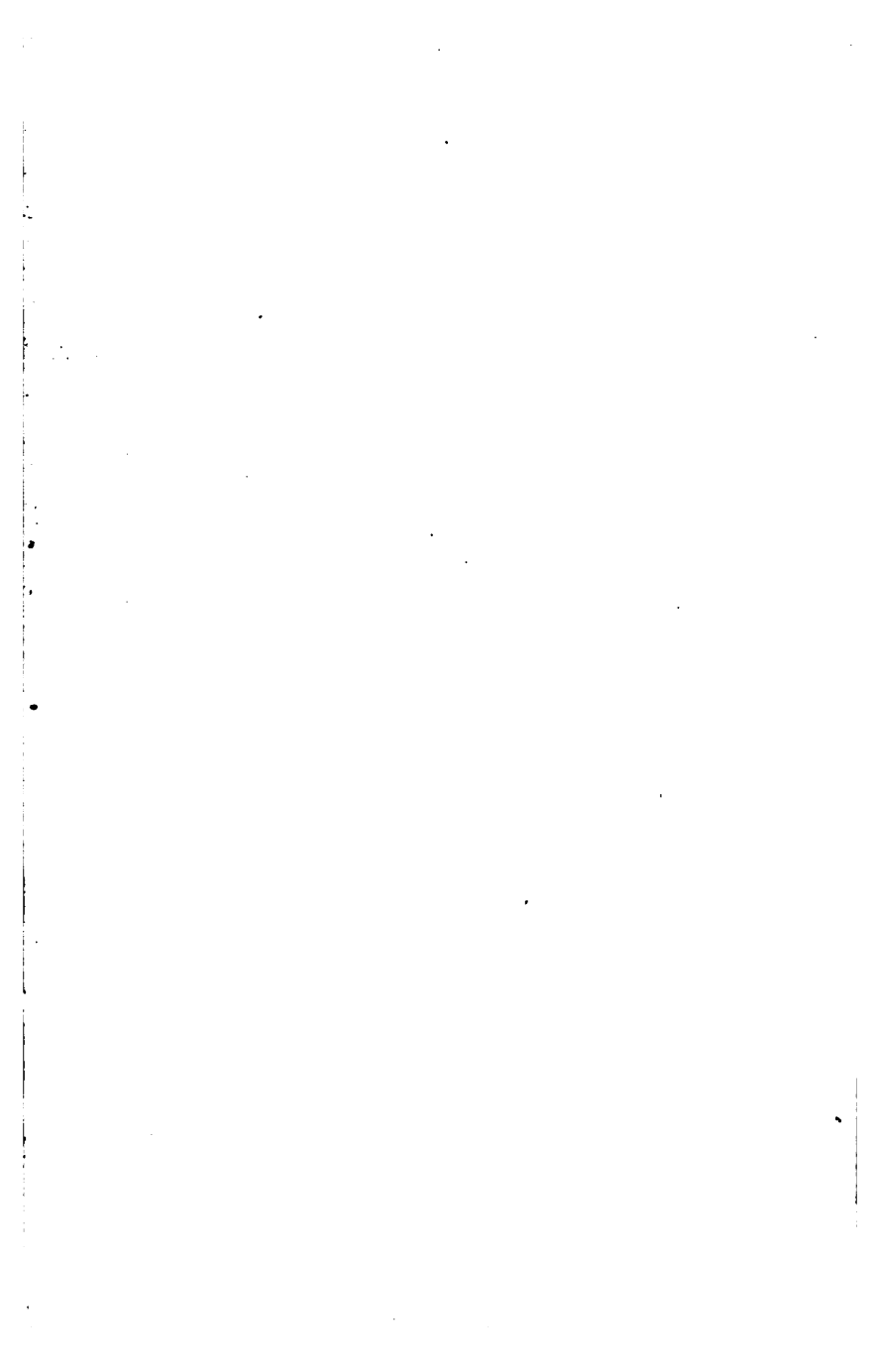
Miss Carteret was much interested in what Varick had told her. It explained certain things which had puzzled her, and she disliked being puzzled. When they had sat down to their own lunch on the day of Birdofreedom's purchase, Braybrooke had been severe and dismal. He had made her feel that she had disgraced the family. But in the middle of the meal he had been called to the telephone, and had come back affable—more than affable, for he was talkative, and called her a "bad girl." She knew then that something had come over the wire which reinstated her. The fact was that Galloway had telephoned from Forbes's an invitation to dinner which he had forgotten to deliver; and before he rang off he had added:

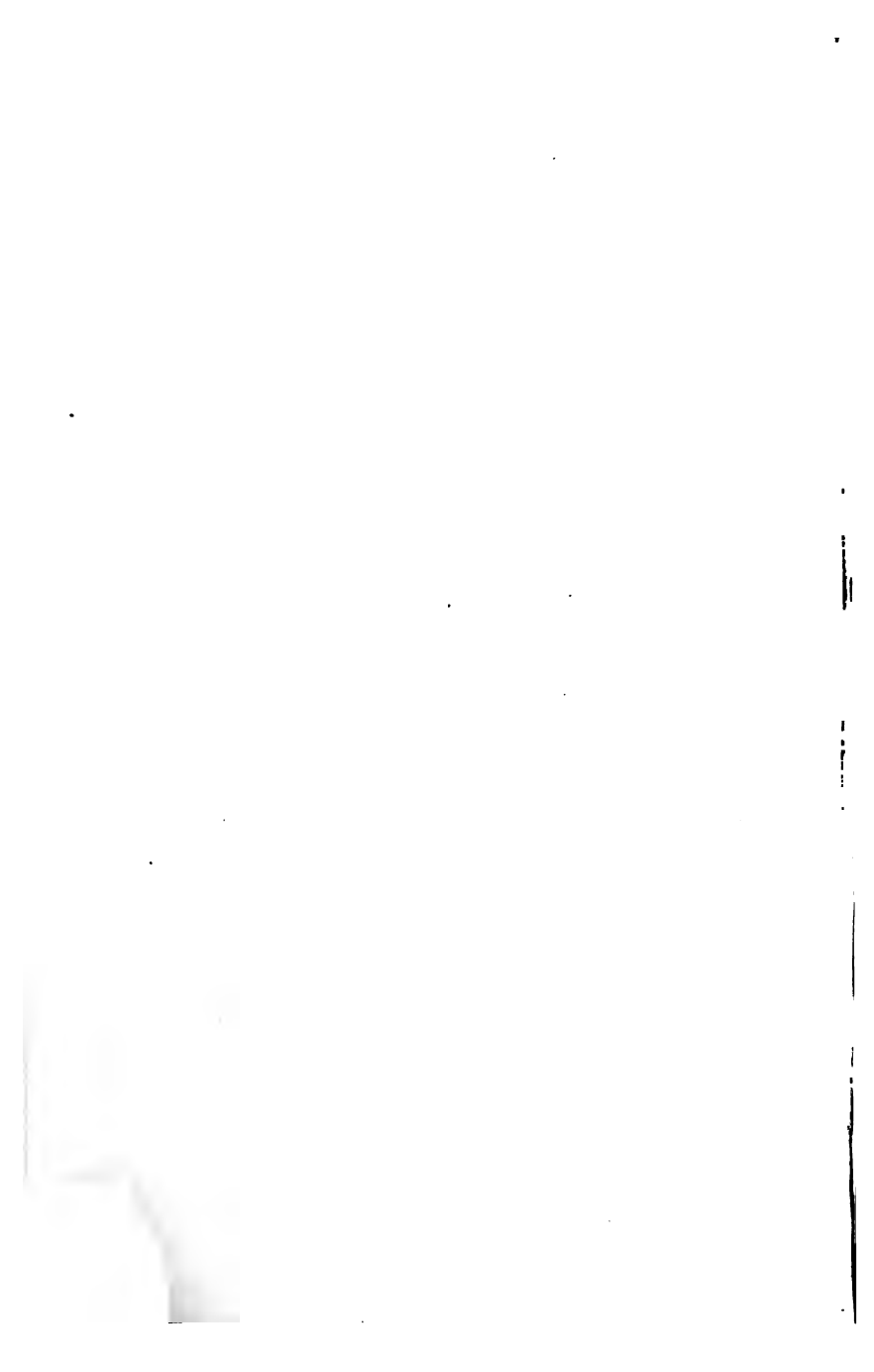
"I say, Brooky, the Carteret girl's a queen. I'd give my jumping cow to get

as good a one on that beast Bennings. Forbes and Varick have let the thing out."

"What thing?" said Braybrooke.

"Why, buying that plug for a joke, you foolish," said Galloway. "Are n't you 'on' yet? Ta-ta!"





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